Jr PBA: Batang Whoppers scuttle Batang Painters
RANMEKEP SINGH POURED 10 OF HIS GAME-HIGH 14 POINTS IN THE fourth quarter as Batang Burger King-Cebracan cleared Batang Rain or Shine San Juan, 47-41, Friday in the Coca-Cola Batang PBA Governor League at the Ynares Arena in Pasig City. In the other game, Japeth Monero and Japeth Aguilar each scored 14 points apiece to power Batang Pure Foods-Bottlepak to a 72-70 rout of Batang Coca-Cola San Pedro, 72-70.

Editor Tedgelyn S. Melendres • Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa
SPORTS
E-mail: jr_sports@inquirer.com.ph
Website: www.inquirer.net/sports

GABE Freeman puts an exclamation point on San Miguel's win with a dunk. RANDY BRACINO

Beermen thwart Boosters

League leaders nail No. 1 seeding; Kings vs Aces today

By Musong R. Castillo

ANTIPOLO—SAN MIGUEL STARTED MIGHTILY BUT NEEDED A BIG second half to survive Barako Bull, 99-92, in a PBA Metroflex Fiesta Cup game that meant practically nothing for both squads at the Ynares Center.

The Beermen, already assured of the No. 1 seeding after Sta. Lucia's victory over Purefoods Thursday night, came back from 12 points down at the half to wrest out the Energy Boosters.

No matter what happens in the Beermen's last three games, the squad will still come out top of the table, according to league computations.

San Miguel won for the 10th time in 12 games while dealing Barako Bull, consigned to finishing 10th and last for the second straight tournament, its eighth straight loss.

"We came out thinking that it would be a walk in the park for us," San Miguel coach Siot Tanquingcen said later. "Good thing we had a whole (second) half to play."

SAN MIGUEL (Olivar Asistores 2 Lapeña-Cruz)
16-16—Alvarez 6, Reyes 5, Ramos 5, Mercado 4, Fortuna 4, Ilagan 4, Cruz 3, Cortez 2, Ibanes 2, Ibanes 2, Ibanes

After eight golds and 'bong' incident, Phelps returns

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA—Michael Phelps wanted to bring more attention to swimming. He's doing that.

Phelps' accomplishments in the pool—and shaky judgment on dry land—has brought plenty of notoriety to him and swimming.

On Thursday, he arrived in Charlotte for his first meet since winning a record eight gold medals at the Beijing Olympics. He'll be competing in front of capacity crowds and media from as far away as Japan, France and Britain—hardly the norm for a timed Pro meet in a non-Olympic year.

"Well, the positive and the negative things, there's a lot more attention being brought to the sport," Phelps said at a news conference shortly after the short flight from Baltimore to North Carolina. "That's something that sport needs and something it deserves."

Of course, he would've preferred the focus remain on his accomplishments in Beijing, not what he did during a party in eight-down-the-road South Carolina three months after the Olympics. That's when someone took that infamous photo of Phelps inhaling from a "bong," a marijuana pipe, a picture that wound up on the front page of a British tabloid and led USA Swimming to give him a three-month suspension.

Whether he likes it or not, Phelps has clearly evaluated the threshold from superstar athlete to cultural icon. He's recognized everywhere he goes and is a fixture in the tabloids, though he insists mostly everything written about his life outside the pool...from supposed wild partying to an adventurous love life—is untrue.

"There are women on the Internet and other places where people can say anything they want to say and not have to back it up," said Bob Bowman, Phelps' longtime coach. "You just frowned on the swimming, but we have learned some interesting things."

More than 80 members of the media crowded into a hastily erected tent to hear from Phelps, who arrived on a mopy city scooter wearing a long-sleeve black shirt and gray slacks. He had the makings of a beard—or maybe he was going for a goatee. AP

Veterans keep UE record spotless

DEFENDING CHAMPION UNIVERSITY OF the East remained unbeaten after two matches, beating Perpetual yesterday, 85-72, but not after almost paying dearly for experimenting with its rookies in the 2009 FIBA Flying V Pre-Season MVP Cup at the FIBA Flying V Arena yesterday.

In the second game, the Eastern University relied on a second-quarter breakaway to put away Lyceum, 75-56, and clinch its second win in four games.

Lyceum has yet to win in four outings.

UE coach Lawrence Chongson, wanting to give exposure to his new recruits led by former MP Youth member Jhun Rey Jamilla, rested his starters for most part of the first half.

But no sweat as the Perpetual started falling behind by double digit spreads, the veterans led by ball-toting Glaiza Espiritu were summoned to restore order.

"I wanted to style the second unit or build up their confidence," said Chongson in explaining his decision to field his rookies for the early parts of the match. "Anyway, the veterans are always going to be there."

Warriors pace Gemay A, a full game ahead of the San Sebastian Stags' 3-0 card. The Stag shocked their third loss in four games to drop to sixth spot in Group B.

ORLANDO Magic center Dwight Howard's gallant stand sends Paul Pierce (front) and the Boston Celtics crashing in Game 6. AFP

Rockets, Magic force Game 7s

HOUSTON—THE HOUSTON ROCKETS came up with a stunning start to the season when the low-budget Lakers 95-80 on Thursday, sending their Western Conference semifinal series into a deciding Game 7.

Aaron Brooks scored 26 points and Luis Scola added 24 points and 12 rebounds as the rampaging underestimated Rockets pushed the top-seeded Lakers to the brink.

The Rockets opened the game with a 17-1 burst, built a 32-16 lead by halftime, then fought off a Lakers rally to force Game 7 on Sunday at the Staples Center.

Kobe Bryant scored 32 and Pau Gasol added 14 for Los Angeles, which lost the only the third time in the past 16 games when it had a chance to close out a series.

The Lakers have one more opportunity to finish off Houston, but they probably didn't expect to need it, three games after Houston nearly was sitting outof the series with a broken left foot.

"We still have no excuse," Brooks said with a huge smile. "We'll keep playing, though."

The winner will play the Denver Nuggets, who finished off Dallas on Wednesday and now have a few extra days to rest.

Whereas Houston had built upon its first half lead on Sunday, this time Los Angeles made a game of it, opening the second half with a 16-3 spurt.

But the Rockets hit their last eight shots in the third quarter and took a 75-63 lead to the fourth. Kobe Bryant connected on a pair of free throws to start the fourth, but Houston answered with a 10-2 run to push its lead to 87-75 with 4:06 left.

The Lakers never got closer than seven points, but missed four of their last six shots.

Magic 83, Celtics 75

In Orlando, Florida, Dwight Howard had 23 points and 22 rebounds after challenging Shaquille O'Neal's coaching strategy as Orlando beat Boston in Game 7 to claim Atlantic Conference semifinal series.

Rashard Lewis had 20 points, and Hedo Turkoglu made a 3-pointer to highlight an 11-2 run to close the game for the Magic, who could clamp the defending champions and reach the Eastern Conference finals for the first time in 13 years.

Paul Pierce finished with 18 points, 16 rebounds and six assists, and Paul Pierce scored 17 for the Celtics, who led by 18 points in the second half before falling apart.

Game 7 is on Sunday in Boston.

Howard blasted Wednesday for not getting the ball more after the Magic's Game 5 collapse, when they blew a 14-point lead in the fourth quarter.

"He's got a dominant player, let him be dominant," Howard said.

He came out trying to back up his strong words. Howard scored the first eight points of the game for the Magic, including a pair of dunks that pumped some life into the home crowd. He finished 9-for-16 shooting. AP

Top 7 seeds make Madrid quarterfinals

MADRID—DEFENDING CHAMPION ANDY Murray moved into the Madrid Open quarterfinals by beating Tommy Robredo, 7-5, 6-1, while top-ranked Rafael Nadal joined him without having to play.

Nadal and ninth-seeded Andy Roddick received walkover wins after their respective opponents—Germany's Philipp Kohlschreiber and 10th-seeded Nikolay Davydenko—withdrew suffering injuries.

In fact, Roger Federer and the top seven men took their seeded places in the quarterfinals, with only No. 8 Gilles Simon, last year's runner-up, missing out. He was ousted by unseeded Ivan Ljubicic, 7-6, 6-4, 6-3.

The quarterfinals lineup will feature Nadal vs. Fernando Verdasco, Federer vs. Roddick, Djokovic vs. Ljubicic, and Murray vs. Juan Martin del Potro.

In the upset-prone women's side, top-ranked Dinara Safina overcame a mid-match dip to beat Lucie Safarova of the Czech Republic, 6-7, 6-3, 6-1, to reach the last eight.

Safina looked like cruising home when she won the first set to love against Safarova. But the Russian's concentration dropped and she had to come from 2-5 down in the third. AP

AFP's best battles MILF bets—in the ring

By Jose Nonoy

DAVAO—THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission will host a unique boxing tournament that could hopefully play a role in solving the conflict brewing over the Moslems.

PSC chair Harry Angping announced today until the boxing tournament will pit the best boxers from the Army, Navy and Air Force against the best grapplers from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MNLF).

Angping said the tournament will get going on May 26 at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex. It will coincide with the opening of a new boxing gym for the national boxers.

Manny Pacquiao, appointed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as the country's goodwill ambassador for peace and an outstanding, will grace the opening ceremonies.

"It was the President who came up with the idea over lunch with Manny Pacquiao," said Angping, who flew here to witness the first Smart Cities-Philippine National Team to be formed.

Ricky Vargas, president of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines, has assured the participation of the three boxers from the military.

On top of the list are Jesus Tipon (Army), Charlie Suarez (Army), Genaliero Banadero (Army), Rene Vidallon (Navy), Roy Salvador (Army), Wilfredo Lagata (Army) and Cirilo Bellen (Army).

"This is one way of eventually get gratitude to the support the PSC has given, especially the concession of our new boxing gym," said Vargas, who also sits as vice chair of the SBP.

SBP boxers Godfrey Cuerva (Army), Albert Batiles (Navy), Jose Antonio Arroyo and Bill Moreno (Navy) are also expected to join the event.

The MILF and MNLF have yet to name their possible bets for the tournament.

AFTER crafting Ricky Hatton, Manny Pacquiao is scheduled to make another ring appearance, this time as a special guest in a tournament featuring Army, Navy and Air Force boxers taking on counterparts from the MILF and MNLF in a duel meet. KATOLIKONOMONGAO

SPORTSWATCH

Tuazon, Lagon lead World Slasher favorites

FORMER LIGA BRGEUER OF THE YEAR DR. ROY TUAZON AND Sonny Lagon lead the list of favorites in today's 2009 World Slasher Cup-2 at the Alameda Coliseum. A total of 80 matches are scheduled in the event scheduled to start at 4 p.m.

Tuazon and Lagon lead a field of thirty veterans with close 4-0 records each as Allan Flaris and Cesar Tan and James Uy and Boston Sison. Hosted by the Pyramid of Champions, the 2009 WSB-2 is organized by the Alameda Center and sponsored by Thunderbird Resort. RV

For ticket info and other details, call 911 2928 or 911 1614 loc. 1081 or 1011 or log on to www.alamedacolisseum.com and www.bobbiesc.com.ph.

YEAR Davis celebrates winning the EDC 2009 basketball tournament open division championship with Energy Development Corp. CEO Paul Aquino (center).

EDC HERO Adventure racing enthusiasts are all set for the "Route, Set, ROAR!" DEF triathlon/duathlon race this year. The Pi-edition adventure race kicked off yesterday in Siargao Island. Siargao and will circle cross through all the top summer tourist destinations in the country. The race course will be littered with several mental and physical challenges that will test the participants severely.

FCBL HOOPS

Red Cubs hold on to No. 2 spot

GAMES TODAY (Southern gym)
10:30 a.m.—Blackwater vs. Cebuana
12 n.—JILEX vs. CEU
2:30 p.m.—St. Jude vs. JRU
4 p.m.—AMA vs. Café

NCAA TRADITIONAL favorite San Beda College solidified its hold on second spot while Lyceum and the Eastern University pin an end to their losing ways in the 2009 Fruitas Milky Corp. Filipino-Chinese Basketball League (FCBL) 2nd Foreign Jones Cup on Thursday at the Bacoor Sports Gym in Quezon City.

The Red Cubs dumped the Tiger Cubs of University of Santo Tomas, 97-48, to improve on 3-1 behind Antonio 6-0. The Red Cubs were led by Dave Mendoza who scattered 18 markers.

The Tiger Cubs fell to 3-3.

In the opening game, Lyceum cruised to two-game slide and stayed in the hunt for a semifinal seat by dismissing the Dolphins, 97-68.

Hi-Street Player of the Game Jovelan Tampus fired a game-high 31 markers and Glue Rhobenzie sank 3 3-pointers to lead the Spiders to their third win against two losses.

The Junior Archers, who dropped to 3-2, got a scattered 47 points from Dwayne Capacio and Luigi dela Paz.

The PBA Baby Twins also ended their five-game losing slide with an 81-58 thrashing of Chiang Kai Shek College.

Freddy Torrence Ramos had an-other high-scoring game with 24 points as the Baby Twins reached their second win in seven starts. Antonio Pinto added 15. Steve Silva, Contributor

RP five survives import injury, rips Lebanon

Front page A23

high-flying Smart Gilas would be back in shape to close the duo quarterfinals on Sunday.

"We don't know the extent of his injury but definitely he will not play against Kuwait," said Smart coach Chot Reyes after Slaughter in the Metro Manila hospital to diagnose the hurting leg.

"If he cannot play, the other big guys will definitely get a lot of minutes," said Reyes.

Reyes was right. Slaughter, 17 of them in the first half when Smart Gilas opened up a 48-34 lead. After Gilas were down, Lebanon pounced on the opportunity and retook the double-digit deficit with Johnson and Charles on the firing end.

Wanted: Three big men for national team

JAKARTA—TELEGUMBA AVIATIONS MANNY V. PANGILINAN, PRESIDENT OF THE Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas, said the Smart Gilas Pilipinas National Team needs three more big men to be competitive internationally.

"We should look for three big men," said Pangilinan a day after the Philippines absorbed a 98-87 setback against Iran's Mehrsam Tehran, whose big men capitalized on RP import LJ Isles' frustrations.

Pangilinan was quoted here in Jayanth Agadar, 6-foot-7 Nateki Al-Hassani and a naturalized foreigner as the think candidates.

—Jaime Hawkins

"We played with heart and passion. He was pained Lebanon and it's a big win for us," said Yeoman after the RP squad notched its second win in two games.

Lebanon missed top local player Fadi El-Khatib who committed back against following a bad fall against Korea in the other day.

Mohsen El-Khatib, Johnson, a former San Miguel Beer import in the 90s, and Charles shouldered Lebanon's hopes and were pushed Smart Gilas behind, 62-62, on Johnson's long three, a volume left in the third.

With the game tied at 68, Yeoman declared two crucial mid-range jumpers and added a putback off a Barroca miss, allowing Smart Gilas to seize control at 73-67.

The Scores
SMART GILAS 84—Barroca 19, Ildo 15, Reyes 12, Cabagnot 9, Tiu 8, Cruz 5, Ahmad 2, Sumalinog 2, Asistio 2, Yeoman 2, Aguilar 2, Ayaay 2, Ramos 1, Ayaay 1, Ramos 1, Ayaay 1, Ramos 1, Ayaay 1

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SPORTS

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■ Rockets, Magic force Game 7s /A27

STANDING UP TO TODAY'S CHALLENGES, GOOD. STANDING UP TO TODAY'S CHALLENGES WITH

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SMART Philippines' guard Chris Tiu penetrates the Lebanese defense put up by import CJ Charles and Ali Mahmoud

RP 5 survives import injury, rips Lebanon

By Jimi Navarro

ASIANS—THE SMART GILAS PILIPINAS National Team put up a gallant stand and survived import CJ Giles' injury to trip Al Riyadi Beirut of Lebanon, 91-86, Friday at the Bellmore Arena here.

The star of the victory, though, can only be determined in the next few days.

Giles collided with Nate Johnson in midair halfway through the third period and crashed, hurting his left knee and forcing RP coach Rico Torrente to alter his battle plans.

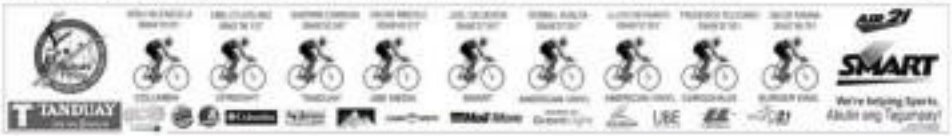
"Those plans included Mark Barroca, Dylan Ababou and Chris Tiu, who all responded to the challenge. Aldrech Ramos and Jason Ballesteros also pitched in by swinging at the low post and making vores sealing 8-foot-11 Chris Charles and Johnson off the blocks.

"Kinda yes, also that we're having a hard time without CJ," said Torrente. "But I'm very proud of my players. They showed a lot of character out there."

Giles was carried out of the court with the Philippines ahead, 56-46, five minutes and 30 seconds remaining in the third and had his swollen knee treated by team therapists.

Torrente announced he will use Giles for the Kuwait match Saturday, hoping that the

MORE



Who bugged the president? And why?

Gerry Lirio
Best Investigative Report
JHO Awards for Excellence in Journalism 2006

Where did the soldiers' money go?

Pia Ranada
1st Prize, Investigative Journalism
JHO Awards for Excellence in Journalism 2007

What went wrong with our schools? What can be done now?

Fernando del Mundo
Best Investigative Report
CMMA 2006

Do I have a shot at the truth?

Edwin Bacasmas
Photojournalist of the Year
National Press Club 2007
First Runner, Photojournalism Contest

If every litter counts, what are you doing the rest of your life?

Leila Salaverria
Special Citation in Best Investigative Report Category
CMMA 2007

Can laughter and serious thinking go together?

Jess Abrera
Best Editorial Cartoon
CMMA 1996

How fast, how festive is your life?

Teena B. Salazar
Henry Fund
Journalism Award 2003

How can business do well by doing good?

Tina Arceo Dantes
Best News Coverage
CMMA 2005 with Ms. Blanche Rivera

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The WORLD

Lilia Lorente B. Gatus

Obama to revive Bush-era terror courts

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA will restart Bush-era military tribunals for a small number of Guantanamo detainees, reviving a fiercely disputed trial system he once denounced but with new legal protections for terror suspects, US officials said on Thursday.

Obama suspended the six tribunals within hours of taking office in January, ordering a review before stopping three of dismissing President George W. Bush's strategy of prosecuting suspected terrorists.

The military trials will resume because the administration admits the legal system that is expected to try fewer than 20 of the 241 detainees at the US naval detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Thirteen detainees—including five charged with helping orchestrate the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks—are already in the tribunal system.

The changes to the system were to be announced on Friday. They revise administration officials outlined several of the rules changes, which will be carried out by executive authority on Tuesday night. They include:

• Restrictions on hearsay evidence that can be used in court against the detainees.

• A ban on all evidence obtained through cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. This would include statements given by detainees who were subjected to waterboarding, a form of simulated drowning.

• Giving detainees greater leeway in choosing their own military counsel.

• Preventing detainees who refuse to testify from legal sanctions or other court prejudices.

The White House may seek additional changes to the military commissions law once the new 12th days, but it was not immediately clear on Thursday what they could include. The two senior administration officials spoke on condition of anonymity because Obama had not yet announced the changes.

The tribunal system—set up after the military began sweeping detainees off the battlefields of Afghanistan in late 2001—has been under repeat legal challenges from human rights and legal organizations because it denied defendants many of the rights they would be granted in a civilian court system.

In a statement late Thursday, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham called Obama's decision to revamp and restart the tribunals a step toward strengthening US detention policies that have been derided worldwide.

But the move by the new Democratic president is certain to face criticism from liberal groups, already riled by the decision on Wednesday to try to block the court-ordered release of photos showing US troops abusing prisoners in Iraq and Afghanistan. That decision marked a reversal of his earlier stand on making the photos public.

"It's disappointing that Obama is seeking to revive rather than end this failed experiment," said Jonathan Hafetz, a national security attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union. AP

Sri Lanka vows to beat Tamil Tigers within 48 hours

COLOMBO—THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNment vowed on Friday to capture all Tamil Tiger-held territory within 48 hours, despite international calls for a truce and accounts of a "humanitarian catastrophe."

The signal that the final push against the beleaguered separatist guerrillas was in full swing came as United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's chief of staff was rushing to the island in a fresh effort to stop the carnage.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the only neutral organization working in the conflict area, said its staff were "witnessing an unimaginable humanitarian catastrophe."

Former colonial power Britain said it wanted an investigation into alleged war crimes, while the United States announced it was blocking a $2.6-billion International Monetary Fund bailout package for Sri Lankan.

Tens of thousands of Tamil civilians are believed to be trapped inside a tiny patch of jungle on the northeast coast still held by the rebels. Hundreds have been reported killed in indiscriminate shelling over the past month.

Sri Lankan government spokesperson Anselm Palpitia said the war against the remaining rebels would be over by Sunday morning.

"The president (Mahinda Rajapakse) assured that within the next 48 hours the humanity of Tamil civilians will be freed from the clutches of the Tamil Tigers," Palpitia said.

"All territory will be freed from Tiger control."

Military officials and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were poised to lose their last patch of the island.

"We are clearing in brim all directions," military spokesperson Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara said.

State media showed footage of jets sweeping through the tropical heath and bypass battle noise, and said the guerrillas appeared to be retreating and destroying communication check points.

Sri Lanka's ITN channel said some civilians were managing to escape. A fleeing Tamil woman told the channel that "there are people dead everywhere, on the streets and everywhere."

The government maintains that the Tigers are using civilians as human shields and they need to be rescued. Any civilian deaths inside Tiger territory have been blamed on the rebels.

The UN's human rights chief Navi Pillay, however, has said both sides may be guilty of war crimes. AFP

ANOTHER VAN ES Photo taken on May 15, 1969, by photographer Hugh Van Es shows a wounded US paratrooper grimacing in pain while waiting for medical evacuation at a camp in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Van Es, who received the famous image of the fall of Saigon in 1975—a group of people scaling a ladder to a CIA helicopter on a rooftop—died on May 13. AP

Van Es, photographer of 'Fall of Saigon,' dies at 67

HONG KONG—HUGH VAN ES, THE Dutch photographer whose photo of the 1975 fall of Saigon became one of the most enduring images of the Vietnam war, died on Friday. He was 67.

Van Es suffered a brain hemorrhage last week in Hong Kong, where he had lived for many years, and never regained consciousness, colleagues said.

The Dutchman was part of what became a familiar generation of journalists who covered the Vietnam war, many of whom paid tribute on Friday to the veteran photographer's courage.

"His sunny demeanor endeared him to his colleagues and to the American and Vietnamese soldiers he photographed," veteran war correspondent Peter Arnett told AFP.

Arnett called him "one of the few Western photographers willing to take the risks of witnessing the war's end."

Van Es became known worldwide for his photograph of a helicopter evacuating people from what is often believed to be the roof of the US embassy in Saigon. In fact the photo shows an apartment building that housed CIA staff.

He wrote in the New York Times in 2000: "One of the best-known images of the Vietnam war shows something other than what almost everyone thinks it does."

The photograph became a symbol of the US withdrawal and its ultimate failure in Vietnam, and it made him famous.

Arnett, who stood beside Van Es as he took the photograph on April 29, 1975, called it "the picture that secured his place—in popular culture and the photographic history of the Vietnam war."

Van Es was born in the Netherlands on July 6, 1941. He decided on his career after seeing an exhibition by legendary combat photographer Robert Capa and made his way to Hong Kong in 1967 to begin his career in Vietnam.

After the Vietnam war, he returned to Hong Kong—a perch he used to cover events across Asia. AFP

Panasonic posts $4B annual loss

TOKYO—PANASONIC LOOKS ready to take the red but faces a year posting a yawning list of Japanese electronics makers who have fallen victim to a stronger yen and an unprecedented slump in global demand.

The Osaka-based company on Friday reported a 378.96-billion yen ($4 billion) loss for the fiscal year ended March—its first loss in seven years—and expects to stay in the red in the current fiscal year.

Business slumped across all segments amid meltdown demand for everything from flat screen TVs and digital cameras to home appliances and semiconductors. Sales were down 16.6 percent to 7.77 trillion yen, and operating profit tumbled 86 percent to 72.9 billion yen.

The result represents a major reversal of fortune for Panasonic, which just last year posted a record net profit of 283.9 billion yen.

But it is only the latest among a score of bellwether brands in Japan ordered into the red by the world's second biggest economy gets hooked by the recession. On Thursday, rival Sony Corp. said it lost $1 billion on the fiscal year.

Panasonic vowed to press ahead with "drastic business structural reforms" to try to recover from the 12 months through March 2010, it forecasts a net loss of 195 billion yen on sales of seven trillion yen.

President Fumio Ohtsubo has said he wants to shutter output at 27 manufacturing sites, and announces in those with growth potential and improve product quality. AP

Disgraced US cleric: Catholic teaching on homosexuality wrong

IN THE SPRING OF 2002, AT THE height of the scandal over sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests was escalating, the long career of Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland of Milwaukee, one of the Church's most venerable voices for change, came up in flames one May morning.

There, on ABC's "Good Morning America," the archbishop watched a man he had fallen in love with 25 years earlier say in an interview that the 900-member archdiocese paid him $450,000 years before to keep quiet about his affair with the archbishop—an affair the man was now calling date rape.

The next day, the Vatican accepted Weakland's retirement.

Weakland, who had been the most forward-looking voice for church reform, has said little publicly since then. But now, in an interview and in comments scheduled for release next month, he is speaking out about how internal church politics affected his response to the fallout from his romantic affair, how bishops and the Vatican stand more about the rights of abusive priests than about their victims, and why Catholic teaching on homosexuality is wrong.

"If we say our God is an all-loving god," he said, "how do we explain that as any given time probably 400 million people on the planet at one time would be gay? Are the religions of the world so close-Catholicism, saying to those hundreds of millions of people, you have to pass your whole life without any physical, genital expression of that kind?"

Weakland, 82, said he was probably the first bishop to come out of the closet voluntarily. He said he was doing so not to excuse his actions, but to give an honest account of why it happened, and to raise questions about the Church's teaching that homosexuality is "objectively disordered."

Weakland said it was partly because of his strained relations with Pope John Paul II that he did not tell Vatican officials in 1997 when he was threatened with a lawsuit by Paul J. Marcoux, the man with whom he had had a relationship nearly 20 years before. AFP

US journalist freed from Iran arrives in Vienna

VIENNA—ROXANA SABERI, THE American journalist freed after some two months in an Iranian prison on spying charges, left the country and flew to the Austrian capital with her parents early today.

After landing at Vienna's airport, Saberi said she planned to spend a few days in the city to recover from her ordeal.

"I came to Vienna because I heard it was a calm and relaxing place," Saberi said. "I know you have many questions but I need some more time to think about what happened to me over the past couple of days."

Her father, Reza Saberi, said they were staying with a friend in Austria. The family was accompanied by an undisclosed man.

Saberi, poised and smiling, thanked all those who supported her during her ordeal—including Austria's ambassador to Iran and Iran itself—by whom she described as "very helpful."

"Both journalists and nonjournalists around the world, I've been hearing, supported me very much and it was very moving for me to hear this," Saberi said.

Saberi, referring to several statements made about her case over the past few days, stressed she was the only one who knew what really happened.

"Nobody knows about it as well as I do and I will talk about it more to the future, I hope, but I am not prepared at this time," she said.

Saberi did not openly hint how long she planned to stay in Austria, saying only: "We're going to stay here for at least a few days and then go on to the United States."

She said it was still unclear if she would also travel to France, where a film she participated premiered at the Cannes Film Festival on Thursday. The film's director is Saberi's partner.

The 32-year-old journalist, who grew up in Fargo, North Dakota, and moved to Iran six years ago, was arrested in late January and was convicted of spying for the United States in a closed-door trial that her lawyer Saeed Jalili said lasted only 15 minutes.

Saberi's mother, Akiko, also thanked all those who supported her daughter over the past few months.

"We're just so happy to be here," she said.

She was freed on Monday and reunited with her parents, who had come to Iran to seek her release, after an appeals court reduced her sentence to a two-year suspended sentence.

The United States had said she charges against Saberi were baseless and repeatedly demanded her release. The case against her had become an obstacle to President Barack Obama's attempts at dialogue with the top US adversary in the Middle East. AP

SABERI in Tehran on May 11

Malaysia confirms first case of swine flu

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia confirmed on Friday its first case of swine flu, the country's top health official said.

"I can confirm that H1 is the first case in Malaysia," Health Ministry Director General Ismail Merican said.

Merican's remarks came just followed a statement from the health ministry giving details of the country's first case.

"The patient is a 21-year-old male student who had just returned from the United States on May 13 and who went to see a doctor with fever and body aches on May 14," it said.

"This is the first A(H1N1) flu case found in Malaysia," the statement added.

It said the patient went into the Sungai Buloh quarantine facility in central Selangor state on the same evening and is now in a stable condition.

It urged all passengers who travelled on the Malaysian airlines flight MH091 from Seventh in the United States to Kuala Lumpur that landed at 7:15 a.m. on May 13 to contact the ministry for further instructions.

The ministry said it had so far received 11 flu-like cases for investigation with all the patients tracked and isolated for monitoring.

"All these cases showed symptoms of flu and had a history of visiting countries infected with the outbreak (but) all these obtained samples had been sent to institutes for medical research for lab tests and further inquiries," it said.

On Saturday, the government urged its citizens to defer travel to the US, Mexico, Canada, Spain and Britain following reported cases of swine flu in those countries.

The latest World Health Organization figures show the number of laboratory-confirmed swine flu cases worldwide is 6,867 in 23 countries. A total of 86 people have died from the disease, most of them in Mexico. AFP

Swine flu not an accident from a lab—WHO

THE SWINE FLU VIRUS DID not result from a laboratory accident, the World Health Organization said on Thursday, seeking to debunk rumors started by an Australian virologist and circulated by newsbulletin all over the world.

"We know this virus is very seriously," Dr. Keiji Fukuda, the agency's deputy director general, said of the virologist's assertion. "But the evidence suggests that this is not a naturally occurring virus, not a laboratory-derived virus."

A STUDENT wears a protective mask in a procession against swine flu in Panama City. AP

In a telephone news conference, Fukuda also expressed support for drug companies' making a generic version of the antiviral drug Tamiflu. Many poor countries have no stockpiles of the drug.

Almost 6,500 confirmed cases of the new H1N1 flu have been reported from 30 countries, and 65 people have died, WHO said. About 4,300 confirmed and probable cases, with three deaths, were reported in the United States.

The virus never was named by Adrian J. Gibbs, a retired plant virologist from the Australian National University, who previously published work in the journal Science questioning the idea, now accepted, that the 1918 pandemic started on a bird flu.

Gibbs, who had studied the genetic sequences of the swine flu virus posted on public virus banks, argued that it must have been grown in eggs, the medium used to survive laboratories. He realized that coincidence, he said, because the new virus was not closely related to known cases and because it had traces of the subtype used in eggs and since vaccines are typical strains of swine flu.

His theory was reported by Bloomberg News on Tuesday. Even though scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were skeptical and some pronounced virologists openly derisive, news outlets have reported and magnified the theory, adding speculation about bioterrorism that even Gibbs repudiated. He was also interviewed on Thursday on the ABC News program "Good Morning America."

Fukuda said a WHO panel of experts had concluded that "the hypothesis does not really stand up to scrutiny." The Mexico residents and researchers were applied, he said, and many swine flu viruses were unrelated because not enough pigs are tested each year.

Scientists have yet to explain the origin of the swine flu virus, the unusual cases of which were found in Veracruz, Mexico. It contains genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia, as well as avian and human genes. AFP

Pope says Christ gives hope for peace in the Middle East

JERUSALEM—(PARTS) 87 Christianity's holiest site, Pope Benedict XVI said on Friday that Jesus offers hope for peace in the Middle East, and insisted it is possible to overcome "mistrustfulness and hostility."

"As Christians, we know that the peace he wants this millennium land yearns has a name: Jesus," the pontiff said at Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre which most Christians believe is built on the site where Jesus was crucified and buried.

"He is our peace," who reconciled us to God in our body through the cross, bringing an end to hostility here his hands, then, let us reject all our fears for the future, just as in the hour of darkness he entrusted his spirit."

Benedict recalled the Gospel's teaching that history must not be repeated and "that the bitter fruits of condemnation and hostility can be overcome and that a future of justice, peace, prosperity and cooperation can arise" for the entire human family.

The Vicar of Christ was welcomed by representatives from the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic and Franciscan monks, the main custodians of the church under a fragile arrangement hammered out over the centuries.

Muslim officials opened the gates of the church in accordance with the status quo accord, which, despite its various rules, has failed to prevent occasional brawls between the denominations that share the holy site, which also include Copts, Ethiopians and Syrian Orthodox.

The Pope kneeled in silent prayer by the altar stone where some say Christians venerate as the site where Jesus was buried for three days before he rose from the dead.

"I pray that the Church in the Holy Land will always draw new strength from its encounter with the risen Lord and from the power of the Holy Spirit," the Pope said.

CELESTIAL SIGN
This food spa offers heavenly delights for customers at a popular shopping mall on North Edsa in Quezon City.

Ruffa files petition for daughters' custody

By Julie M. Aurelio

ACTRESS-TOO FORMER BUNNY queen Ruffa Gutierrez-Belleza has asked a Quezon City family court to allow her to take custody of her two daughters, ages 5 and 4, after the separation from her Turkish husband.

The TV host, whose real name is Shamsuzar Gutierrez-Belleza, recently filed a petition for custody with her estranged husband, Turkish businessman Yilmaz Bektas, at the other party.

Sources learned that the case was raffled off early this week to Judge Jose Bautista Jr. of Regional Trial Court Branch 107, one of several family courts in Quezon City.

But as the court handling the case is a family court, the contents of the petition, docketed as Civil Case No. Q-09-64770, can only be revealed to the concerned parties in the case.

A court staff who declined to be identified, however, said Belleza had been sent a summons through his address in Istanbul, informing him of the petition filed by the custody of his daughters.

"The court has yet to determine if the petition for custody is under its jurisdiction before it schedules a hearing for both parties," the court staff said.

Gutierrez is the daughter of showbiz couple Eddie Gutierrez and Annabelle Rama, and married to actor Richard Gutierrez, who set also shows his personalities.

Belleza and Gutierrez were married at Fort Bonifacio Global City in Taguig City on March 25, 2003.

In May 2007, the couple announced their mutual decision to end their four-year marriage.

"It's time once more since we've separated. I just want to finally put things in order. It's time to start working on the legal process of our separation. He has moved on and I have moved on as well," the actress said.

Gutierrez is expected to file her answer next week, said a source close to the actress. With a report from Sharmed Cruz

GUTIERREZ with daughters Venice and Lorin in a 2005 file photo. ALEXANDER

German trader shot dead in Quezon City

By Erika Gallego

A GERMAN BUSINESSMAN was gunned down by two unidentified men yesterday morning as he was walking to his car parked near his apartment in Quezon City.

The victim, Martin Kessler, 48, died of multiple gun shot wounds.

A report from the Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit said Kessler, an executive of a software company, was walking towards his car when the shooting happened.

The victim's car was parked some 30 meters away from his unit at the 1.11, Ipanville along General Luis Street in Barangay Sta. Cruz, when two armed men shot him from behind.

Kessler was hit on the back of his head and fell down, after which the assailants approached him and shot him several times.

The assailants then casually walked away from the scene.

SPO1 Leonardo Pano said they are investigating reports that Kessler allegedly lived six mistress from a software company he owns with an investment executive.

The H1N1 FLU: What You Need to Know

For a brief period, it seems the name "Swine flu" dropped from the virus' place of origin. But now, in the Netherlands, it has gradually called the "Flu Flu" or "Mexican Flu," supposedly when the first outbreak was reported. In other parts of the world, it was called "Mexican virus" and "flu" which led "Swine Influenza." Some health organizations called it the "North American influenza" or "Swine Flu Virus."

But in a recent conference, officials of the World Health Organization decided to finally calling the new influenza strain as "H1N1 Flu" which the "Influenza A (H1N1) virus human," regardless of the cause of infection — mankind.

THE FLU'S SPREADER

Unlike the Avian Flu, which requires direct contact with contaminated animal fluids, contracting the H1N1 flu virus can require contact with an infected person. It is transmissible from human to human. It has spread from Mexico to various regions of the U.S and Canada, with confirmed cases both in Europe and Asia. To date, the list of contracting the H1N1 flu virus is known as swine-human hybrid virus, though it is generally thought that the H1N1 flu spreads in the same manner that the typical seasonal flu is spread — by coughing and sneezing. "Many new infected countries are not reporting any deaths, only local transmission of person to person.

Although data are scarce for H1N1 flu infection, scientists point to incubation periods for the H1N1 flu virus. Incubation is a viral temperature range of 98.6°F for H1N1 (Avian) flu virus.

H1N1 SYMPTOMS

The WHO, for symptoms of the flu are significantly different than common cases in Mexico, but generally, the symptoms of the H1N1 Flu are as follows: Influenza Like Illness (ILI), fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and in some cases, diarrhea and vomiting.

VIRAL TRANSMISSION BY TOUCH

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) [illegible] that this virus can be spread by people touching surfaces with the virus on them, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Studies have revealed that flu viruses can live and survive 2 to 8 hours upon being deposited on an outside surface (not skin cells). Surfaces like desks, table tops, doorknobs, elevator buttons, telephones and doorknob buttons.

WHAT PREVENTS THE H1N1 VIRUS?

Although the H1N1 flu virus does not of being that, scientists as an official pandemic as the CDC's benchmark fatalities caused by it are 1.5 magnitude but the [illegible] is still multiplying and [illegible] contaminated surfaces at an hours. Some viable [illegible] transmitted items, such as vaccine doses, hydrogen peroxide, saline based solutions as well as [illegible] in destroying the H1N1 virus, when used correctly. Among the most effective, according to the CDC, is good hand hygiene through washing with soap and water, and using rubbing alcohol.

HEALTH EXPERTS' ADVICE: VIRAL PREVENTION

Studies have shown that H1N1 virus can survive outside its infected human host and gain mobility via respiratory droplets that may later settle on frequently touched surfaces. That's why health authorities are now emphasizing the habit of handwashing for at least 20 seconds.

Another practice that health experts are keen on recommending is the use of rubbing alcohol, diluted, as an anti-viral solution. Alcohol, is one of the most effective ways of preventing the H1N1 virus from spreading. Health can be achieved [illegible] situations and as you guard from your surface soap and water. Keeping a bottle of rubbing alcohol nearby is especially helpful for those who are mobile and often in public places. Hands should be rubbed until they are dry.

Prevention by hygiene is key to controlling the spread of the virus.

No official results on Etong case out yet–NBI

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF Investigation (NBI) maintained yesterday that it has not yet come out with its official finding on the investigation of the death of Trisdad Etong, wife of ARK-CIDG boundmaster Ted Baltazar Etong).

Lawyer Fe Diaz, NBI spokesperson division chief and spokesperson for the Etong case, said all cases of the bureau involved in the investigation are still in the process of "wrapping up," adding that it was still too early to conclude if there was foul play or if it was a case of suicide.

Diaz, however, said hopeless that the official results of the investigation would definitely be released by the agency next week.

News item

He said a news item on an alleged NBI finding that Etong's death was a case of suicide had based the conclusion on only one aspect of the investigation involving neuro-psychiatric examination.

"You cannot rely on only one part of the probe," the NBI official stressed.

He explained that to come up with a factual and definitive conclusion, the findings of all branches of criminalistics, including medico-legal, forensic chemistry, questioned documents and handwriting analysis, ballistics and field investigators, have to be taken into account.

"It would be difficult to come up with the official results of the investigation based on only one branch of criminalistics," Diaz pointed out.

Etong was found shot in the head on April 13 inside the Fabies home in Yintra Pem Homes on Tandang Sora, Quezon City.

She died a day after while undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Lim still undecided on new zone ordinance

By Tina G. Santos

ALTHOUGH MANILA MAYOR Alfredo Lim had said that health and public safety would be his primary consideration vis-a-vis the ban of the Sheridan oil depot and other major industries operating in the city, he was quick to add that he had not yet made up his mind on the controversial issue.

Lim has yet to sign Ordinance 7177, which creates zones for residents and heavy industries in the city, for it to become a law.

The ordinance was approved by the City Council on third and final reading last Thursday to, effect, it allows the oil depot, as well as other industrial plants, to continue operating in the city.

"I haven't read its provisions, but I will ask my legal team to study it before I take action," Lim told reporters.

In an interview two months ago, Lim said he would veto the ordinance that would amend the city's zoning plan.

When reminded about his previous statement, the mayor said because that he would weigh all factors first before he makes a decision. He, however, stressed that he would comply with the decision of the Supreme Court.

Last week, the high tribunal affirmed with finality its decision upholding Ordinance 8027, which reclassified parts of Pandacan and Sta. Ana from industrial and commercial zones, mandating Pilipinas Shell, Chevron and Petron to transfer their operations elsewhere.

But Councilor Adrian Ros, author of the newly approved ordinance, pointed out that the Supreme Court had said in order may be superseded by a new ordinance to be passed by the city council, or any amendment to Ordinance 8027.

Meanwhile, the Social Justice Issues has informed the Supreme Court of the Manila City Council's passage of the ordinance revising the zonal classification of Pandacan that would pave the way for the stay of the oil depots in the area.

In a manifestation, lawyer Vasilisa Calupitan and Rosalinda Bautista asked the High Tribunal to consider the manifestation in denying the latter's motion with the oil depot pending before the High Tribunal.

With Norman Bordadora

Senate, House afraid of Mike Velarde?

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

MSGR LT. MIKEY GARANA'S allegations about the misuse of P46 million for the 2007 KPAX Rallidaes exercises should be investigated (but) ought to pass on real to goals and corruption in the Armed Forces.

It's an open secret in the military that before a general retires, he is given a palusoy or send-off gift by his subordinates who handled funds.

All generals who head brigades, divisions, major commands (Army, Navy, Air Force), separate commands, such as Mindanao, and those assigned at general headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo are given a bounty to make their civilian life comfortable.

The bounty comes from finances officers and comptrollers whom the generals appoint as their personal staff.

That's the reason why when another general takes over the position of the one who retired, he insists his own comptroller and finance officers.

Godfrey knows whether she spoke about her former boss, retired Lt. Gen. Eugenio Cedo, erstwhile chief of the Western Mindanao Command (Mindanelcom) because she was a member of his immediate staff.

The young Navy officer was probably careless with a guilty conscience and thus spilled the beans on Cedo.

The military is one big university and its members are known to conceive or silence like those in the Mafia.

Deposit reminder to name Galilea's son. Already, the Navy has declared her a deserter.

+++

How ironic that Malacañang has ordered an investigation into Godfrey's allegations when for several months, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, is herself linked to massive graft and corruption.

When the chief is allegedly corrupt—or perceived to be corrupt—the people below the totem pole are also corrupt.

Nothing will come out of the investigation ordered by Malacañang.

+++

Drug smuggling is the name of the game in the Arroyo administration.

So what's another exception of a government project to a small town in Negros Occidental?

A four-kilometer stretch of road in La Castellana, 80 kilometers from Bacolod City, will cost taxpayer Juan de la Cruz P115 million.

The normal and legal cost of a road construction project is P50 million per kilometer, according to a contractor involved in road construction.

So, the road project in La Castellana should have been P60 million at the normal and legal cost.

The road project in La Castellana, which belongs to the district of Rep. Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, is therefore overpriced by P55 million.

+++

If Sen. Manuel Villar has nothing to hide, why doesn't he first let peers in the Senate sit in a committee of the whole on allegations he was behind the P200-million double funding in Congress of the C-5 interchange?

Why did he have to go to the media to deny the allegations when the media will cover his investigation in the Senate, anyway?

Villar, who was ousted as Senate president because of those allegations, said he was willing to let he would be found guilty by his fellow senators.

So, he's now conditioning the minds of the public that if he's found guilty it's because his colleagues ganged up on him.

Mr. Senator, please don't insult the intelligence of the public. People can think for themselves.

+++

But why is the Senate sleeping on Villar?

Why doesn't the Senate, as well as the House of Representatives, investigate El Shaddai leader Mike Velarde who sold a piece of land to the government at 1,000 times its market value?

Are the senators and congressmen afraid of Velarde?

Amalia, son post bail in QC court for robbery charges

By Julie M. Aurelio

ACTRESS AMALIA FUENTES AND her son yesterday morning posted bail in a Quezon City court for their robbery charges filed against them by officials of a corporation in 2007.

The staff of presiding Judge Edgar Inumerable confirmed that the judge allowed the bail reduced for Fuentes because real estate in Amalia Malabanan Inocencio and her son Gerard Inocencio who paid P50,000 altogether. Santos also granted them provisional liberty during the trial of the case.

Originally a bail of P150,000 each was recommended for the provisional liberty of the two respondents, along with fellow Rosales and Oberdado Cabillo.

The charges stemmed from a 2007 complaint filed by Isabel Ramos and Idelita Lopez-Bernardo of Elite Mechanic Agricultural Corp., with offices along E. Fuentes Boulevard in Cubao.

Ramos, a majority stockholder and [illegible] the corporate secretary, alleged that Fuentes, with several others, picked the lock of the VMA office in November 2007 and carried away documents from the office.

The complainants included personal files, managers' checks, digital cameras, car registration papers, titles, check books and stock certificates all worth P241,725.44, reportedly belonging to Ramos.

State prosecutor Jose Perez have filed a resolution accusing Fuentes, her son Gerard Inocencio and seven others of robbery with force upon things.

In his resolution, Perez said there was probable cause to indict the actress and the three other respondents as they were positively identified by the security guard on duty at the time of the incident.

According to records, security guard Prosidicio Bedolaga said Ramos told him she would just pick up her passport at the FMA office, where her estranged husband, Joseph, held office. Fuentes and her son were joined by Ramirez, and the other respondents, the guard added.

Retired police official, wife robbery victims

By Gaudi Lou M. Pagente

MANILA POLICE DISTRICT (MPD) operatives are now looking for two men who robbed a retired Manila police major and his wife of $5 dollars and local currency valued at P198,000, and jewelry in Sta. Cruz on Wednesday.

Senior Chief Insp. Jorge David, 61, and his wife, Rosalinda, 58, were on board a Toyota Fortuner en their way to Sta. Cruz Church when a motorcycle with an license plates blocked their path as they were near MacArthur Bridge.

According to a police report, the motorcycle rider alighted from his vehicle and approached the window by the driver's side, even pointing his gun but had been hit by the David's sports utility vehicle.

Accomplice

Another man approached the passenger side of the vehicle where the former police official was seated and poked a gun at him.

The suspect then made a quick grab for David's gold necklace worth an estimated P360,000.

His companion, meanwhile, took Rosalinda's shoulder bag containing $5,740, P198,000 in cash and assorted credit and automated teller machine cards.

Getaway

The robbers immediately fled on board their motorcycle with their loot when Rosalinda accidentally activated a siren attached to the Toyota Fortuner.

Aplus METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Ulandey

Courier eyed in Makati murders

By Allison W. Lopez

POLICE ARE EYEING THE MESsenger of a former employee as a suspect in the killing of a computer shop owner and his two workers in Makati City on Thursday.

Homicide section chief Insp. Renan Oro said the suspect, whose name was withheld, was positively identified by Arthur Emslen and Glen Pinlisan, both computer technicians who survived the stabbing spree, through a picture shown to them.

Pinlisan remained in critical condition because of stab wounds on the neck while Emslen is still under observation in a hospital.

Based on the technicians' statements, the suspect won with three other men when they shot and stabbed dead Korean nationals Alex Ro, Enye Cortes and Rony Lasarte inside the IP-Tel tech Systems Corp. office on Singian Street, Barangay Poblacion, around 11:30 a.m. on May 14.

The bodies of Ro and Cortez were found in the living room of the first floor while Lasarte was in the kitchen. There were no signs of forced entry.

According to the technicians, one of the suspects entered the shop and said he was looking for computer accessories. He was later followed by the messenger, and two others who immediately looked the gun and demanded money from Ro.

According to Oro, the witnesses knew the messenger since he was often sent to the shop to run errands for a former employee of the shop. On the day of the incident, the messenger was supposed to deliver money. He has not returned to his office since, according to his boss.

P12M worth of illegal drugs seized in Manila

By Nikka Catherine Calleja

POLICE CONFISCATED P12 MILLION worth of illegal drugs and arrested three suspected dealers, including a Chinese national, in a buy-bust operation in Binondo, Manila, on Wednesday, the National Capital Region Police Office said yesterday.

Supt. Leo Francisco, head of the NCR intelligence operations unit, named the suspects as John Wu, 38, a Chinese national, Dexter Teddy Mamao, 35, and Mangondato Abul Hussin Mirandilla, 28.

Mirandilla and Mamao are both natives of Marawi City while Wu is a frequent visitor to the country, according to Francisco.

Apart from the illegal drugs, police also recovered a black Toyota Altis and a silver gray Mitsubishi Outlander from the suspects.

Believed to be big-time dealers in Metro Manila, the suspects have been charged with drug pushing and possession of illegal drugs in the Manila City Prosecutor's Office.

The police, however, refused to divulge other details about the syndicate where the three suspects allegedly belong, saying they were still conducting follow-up operations.

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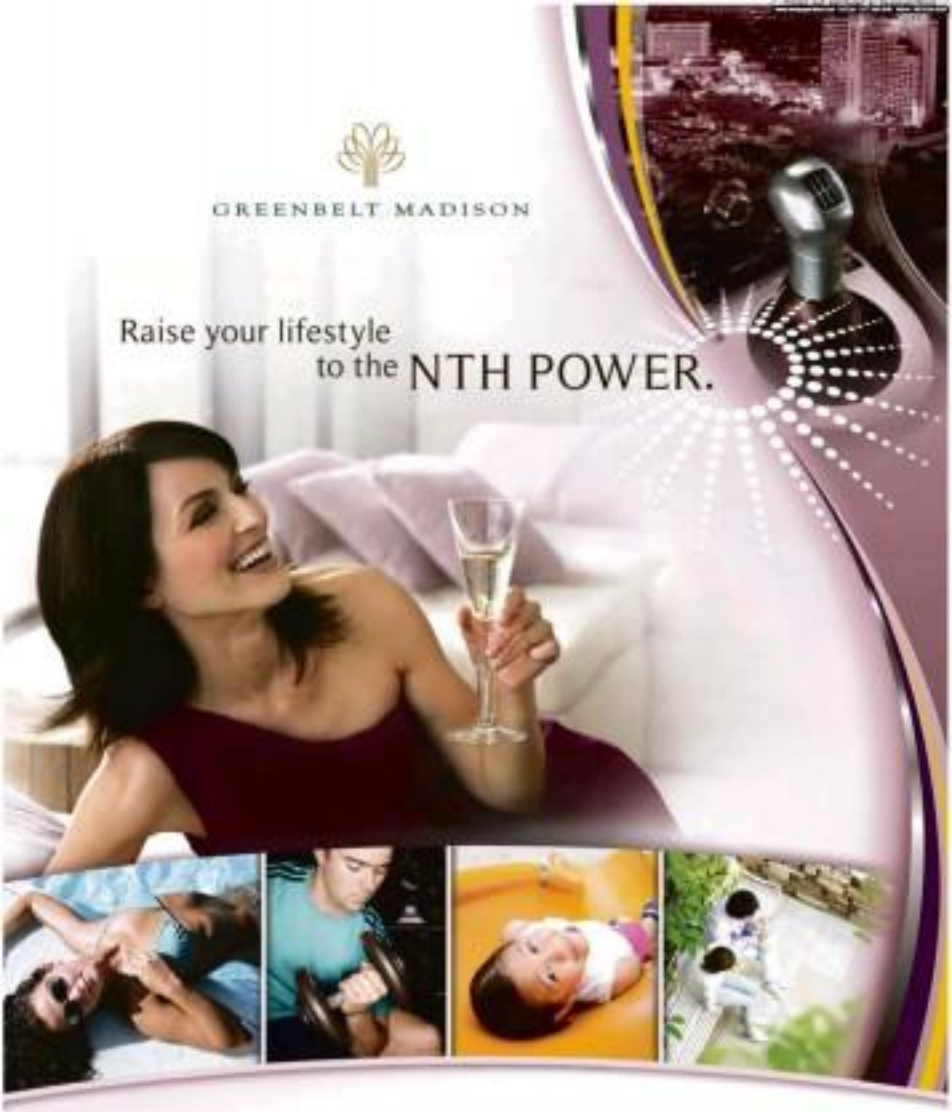

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Developer

MEGAWORLD CORPORATION

ALIVE AND WELL Aquacultivists visit a clam farm on the coral reef of Bunaken Island. Leaders (photo at right) from six nations agree on May 15 to work jointly to save Southeast Asia's massive Coral Triangle—which holds the "richest concentration" of tidewater corals, fish, crustaceans, mollusks and marine plants in the world. KIMIKO DUCKER

HEADS OF WORLD'S RICHEST WATER WILDERNESS The Coral Triangle Initiative leaders pose for a souvenir photo at the Grand Kawanua Convention Center, from left: Prime Minister Derek Sikua of Solomon Islands, President Jose Ramos-Horta of Timor Leste, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, President Arroyo, Prime Minister Michael Somare of Papua New Guinea and Prime Minister Dato Najib Abdula Razak of Malaysia. MALACAÑANG PHOTO

6 leaders vow to save Coral Triangle

From page A1

According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Coral Triangle holds the "richest concentration" of tidewater corals, fish, crustaceans, mollusks and marine plants in the world.

The CTI was praised by environmental groups as a rare example of high-level leaders backing an ambitious conservation plan.

Nothing like it

Connie Rubio, international head (West Sulawesi unit) in a statement: "In 30 years of conservation work, I have never seen anything like this; six heads are signing a commitment to protect their marine resources for the wellbeing of their citizens and future generations."

The other signatories of the agreement were Malaysian Prime Minister Dato Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Michael Somare, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Solomon Islands Prime Minister Derek Sikua and Timor Leste President Jose Ramos-Horta.

"It's a world struggling with global warming, we are showing the way toward a united front to keep our biodiversity intact, our food resources strong and our environment protected," Ms Arroyo said at the summit held at the Grand Kawanua Convention Center.

Amid Indonesia's hustle: "The Coral Triangle is a globally recognized treasure. It's a unique, there is nothing like it on Earth."

Vital food source

Scientists say a combination of climate change, overfishing and pollution is destroying ecosystems in the Coral Triangle, which is a vital source of food for millions of people and a nursery for maritime life from turtles to tuna.

Under the CTI, the United countries agreed to expand protected ocean reserves by millions of hectares and establish joint strategies for identifying key ecosystems and species for conservation.

The agreement calls for fishing to be banned from 20 percent of each major coastal habitat in the Triangle, such as coral reefs, mangrove forests and seagrass areas, but only to a specific time target.

It sets targets ranging between 2011 and 2020 for the designation and establishment of "priority seascapes" marine reserves and stronger legislation and planning to curb overfishing and protect threatened species.

The CTI also calls for the establishment within four years of a plan to help coastal and small island ecosystems adapt to consequences of climate change, such as rising sea levels, warming waters and increases in salinity.

Indonesia—a massive archipelago of 17,000 islands—said it would set aside 20 million ha of maritime conservation parks by 2020, up from the current 15.4 million.

But the overall plan contains no solid combined target on the protected areas.

According to a report by the environment group WWF Ireland this week, climate change could wipe out the Coral Triangle by century's end if nations do not commit to deep cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases blamed for global warming.

The death of the reefs could leave more than 100 million people without livelihoods, triggering destabilizing mass migrations to cities and neighboring countries, it said.

A new round of international climate change talks to replace the Kyoto Protocol will take place in the Danish capital Copenhagen in December.

BIMP-EAGA

In Manila, Malacañang quoted Ms Arroyo as saying in Manado that the BIMP-EAGA (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area) was taking its own steps to protect the spawning grounds of tuna.

"We are pursuing the adoption of policies that call on the tuna industry to share the cost of saving for tuna spawning grounds in the Coral Triangle," the President said.

She said the group was also pursuing the setting up of a joint fisheries commission among the countries' private sectors.

Thankfully she said, the Global Environment Facility and the Asian Development Bank, as well as Australia and the United States, had been providing financial and technical assistance.

Conservation International, Nature Conservancy and WWF have joined hands to work with countries in the Coral Triangle in "saving traditional as well as regional marine plans, Ms Arroyo said.

But to make a global impact, said, "we must strive to carry the message of Manado into the ongoing meetings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change."

Partnership

On the home front, Ms Arroyo said the government had partnered with Conservation International and WWF to identify a "new priority seascape" in line with the regional plan of action on the Coral Triangle.

"This is a true government-NGO partnership that is universally working to preserve our marine resources," she said.

INDONESIA Mangroves and coral reef grow off Bunaken Island National Marine Park in Northern Sulawesi, a rich area that is marine-protected area with flourishing coral reefs, seagrass bed and home to endangered species. KIMIKO DUCKER

As part of its efforts under the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion Program, the Philippines, together with Malaysia and Indonesia, is developing the Sulu-Celebes sea/ small fisheries management project in support of the CTI plan of action on sustainable fisheries management.

Effective tuna management

This will be implemented this year, Ms Arroyo said.

The Philippines also signed memorandums of understanding on fisheries cooperation; with Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea as part of their common move to sustainable development of the fishing industry.

"We are interested in Papua New Guinea's leadership in innovative and effective tuna fisheries management as we look at ways to effectively protect the juvenile and spawning grounds of tuna in our seas part of the Coral Triangle," Ms Arroyo said.

Reports from AFP and TJ Burgonio in Manila

Free Suu Kyi; US, allies slam Burma

From page A1

"I am deeply troubled by the Burmese government's decision to charge Aung San Suu Kyi for a baseless crime," said Clinton, who called the new charges "a pretext to place further unjustified restrictions on her."

The democracy activist has been charged with breaching the terms of her house arrest in a bizarre incident in which a US man swam to her lakeside house and had inside her home.

Aung San Suu Kyi, now removed from her home, is being held at the grounds of Insein Prison, where the Burma (also known as Myanmar) government said she faced trial on Monday.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon was "gravely concerned" about the case, his deputy spokesperson Marie Okabe said in a statement, adding Ban believed the democracy activist "is an essential partner for dialogue in Burma's national reconciliation."

Condemnation

In Geneva, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana, called for Aung San Suu Kyi to be freed, and said her detention broke the country's laws.

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and human rights minister Rama Yade issued a joint statement condemning the move: "In the strongest terms."

Piero Fassino, the European Union's special envoy to Burma, said the international community should use "every possible means to press for the release" of the Nobel Peace Prize winner, as well as "the 2,000 other political prisoners who are held in Burmese jails."

Protest to extend detention

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said the junta, which has kept Aung San Suu Kyi, 63, under prolonged house arrest, was eager to group any excuse to extend her detention.

"The Burmese regime is clearly intent on finding any pretext, no matter how tenuous, to extend her unlawful detention," Brown said in a statement, adding that the move did not bode well for next year's elections in Burma.

Canada also joined the chorus of global protest, urging Burma to release all political prisoners and specifically naming Aung San Suu Kyi.

"Our government is alarmed by the charges laid against Aung San Suu Kyi, and we call for her immediate release, along with all political prisoners in Burma," Canada's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Peter Kent said.

Canada also joined the chorus of global protest, urging Burma to release all political prisoners and specifically naming Aung San Suu Kyi.

"Our government is alarmed by the charges laid against Aung San Suu Kyi, and we call for her immediate release, along with all political prisoners in Burma," Canada's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Peter Kent said.

"We strongly urge the Burmese authorities to provide appropriate medical care for Aung San Suu Kyi and for all inmates held unjustly in its prisons."

Aung San Suu Kyi appeared with her two maids in court at the notorious prison near Rangoon's Insein, hours after police whisked her away from the residence where she has been held for most of the past two decades.

Stopped by the junta from taking power after winning an election in 1990, the now heavy a unanimous jail term of five years which would stretch her detention past its supposed expiry date this month and through the 2010 elections.

There was no immediate response in her case arose from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), the regional bloc which includes Burma.

Asean embarrassed

Calls and e-mails to the Jakarta secretariat of Asean were not immediately answered and there was no immediate official reaction from Burma's eastern neighbor and ally China, nor any Asian governments.

Asean has long been wary of criticizing Burma, but the US nation-club has found itself embarrassed by the regime, led by the reclusive General Than Shwe.

During an Asean summit in Thailand last month, Burma threatened to boycott a meeting with human rights advocates if a Burmese activist was present. The activist was not allowed into the session.

In Japan, dozens of prodemocracy campaigners rallied to demand her release.

"Free Suu Kyi!" chanted more than 60 supporters from Burma in front of the country's embassy in Tokyo, holding banners that read, "The military junta should stop oppression with its soldiers!" AFP

Pacman says no ...

From page A1

"But Manny said no. He thinks I am too old. But I know how to act in front of the camera. We are thinking about it. I want to become an actress. But I will leave the decision to Manny," Dionisia told the boxers to Filipinos.

She said that a project, where she would endorse a brand of underwear for a beauty soap, was already being finalized.

"Manny was the one who encouraged everything," said Dionisia, who turned 60 yesterday with a lavish party.

One wish

Dionisia said she will Bonjuan and his wife Judy that she was very happy on her birthday.

"They've given me so much, I cannot ask for anything more. I have my wish—to stay healthy and have a long life so I can spend more time with my children and grandchildren," she said.

Preparations for Dionisia's birthday bash started on Thursday with a visit to her dressmaker, right where she had a facial and a diamond peel treatment.

Yesterday, she had four attendants with her dance instructor for her dance number even as the party venue was being decorated as early as lunchtime as festivities were supposed to kick off at 8 p.m.

High-profile guests

Several high-profile guests from show biz and politics, including former first lady Imelda Marcos, were invited. But none of them showed up by the time the party started.

As of presstime, only Deputy National Security Adviser Luis "Chavit" Singson among the celebrity guests was seen.

Lee Ann Ortega, Pacquiao's private secretary, said she herself did not know who the invited guests would be, as her boss wanted to surprise his mom.

Pacquiao, the new Ring Magazine and International Boxing Organization (IBO) Light welterweight champ, and his entourage arrived from Manila at 3 p.m. yesterday on a private plane.

Nonstop dancing

The Filipino boxing legend and Singson reportedly took care of hosting the high-profile guests.

Omega and '90 orchestra had been seen on the party venue expecting some 400 guests.

"Sir Manny wanted his mom to be happy on her 80th birthday. After the program, there would be nonstop dancing for everyone," she said.

Across the NATION

UN exec alarmed over displacements

DATU ODIN SINSUAT, MAGUINDANAO—A United Nations official said on Thursday that the increasing number of families displaced by the violence between the military and Moro rebels is fast becoming a major cause for concern.

"We were hoping that the situation will reverse, but instead, that in the last few weeks, there's another upsurge of fighting in the region, which we are concerned about because this is causing new displacements," said Stephen Anderson, country director of the UN World Food Program, during a visit to evacuation camps in Maguindanao and North Cotabato.

Anderson, who arrived with seven ICRC Convoption, the NPF's Ambassador Agabat Hangar in the Philippines, said 41,000 families were displaced due to fresh violence in the troubled provinces.

The hostilities in Maguindanao and North Cotabato started in August when Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels allegedly went on rampage.

On top of the military's list is Ameril Umbra Kato, commander of the MILF's 105th Base Command.

The manhunt for Kato has so far yielded no result, except for casualties on both sides.

"We are concerned about the daily artillery and bombings as well as the impact on the ground," Anderson said.

Convoption expressed hope that the government and the MILF would resume peace talks soon to prevent more people from leaving their homes.

She said the effect of the evacuations was enormous and that it is also affecting other programs.

"Our budget for food for education was used in emergency relief," she said.

But Convoption said what was important now is for the people to have something to eat.

"We support the peace process and we are here to provide the relief," she said. *Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao*

Disaster monitoring system inaugurated

By Nestor P Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE PROVINCE of Iloilo has improved its readiness for flooding and other natural disasters with the inauguration of a disaster warning and monitoring system held Friday by the Department of Science and Technology.

The early warning and monitoring system in Iloilo formed part of a $1-million (around P48 million) project funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (Koica), which included similar systems in Aklan province in Luzon and in Agusan in Mindanao.

The system would have a monitoring display to be manned at the Iloilo Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC) office, which would receive real time reports from six unmanned rain gauges, two water level sensors and an automated weather station, according to Rachunel Servando, deputy administrator of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

The rain gauges were situated along the Jalaur River Basin, one of the major tributary systems in Western Visayas, in the towns of Dingle, San Rafael, Lambunao, Calinog, Ilihan and Barotac Viejo, and will transmit rainfall and water level data to the monitoring display system at the PDCC office, Servando said.

Solar power

The water level stations located in Dingle and Zarraga town and the automated weather station at San Enrique town will record and transmit data on basic atmospheric measures including wind velocity and direction, barometric pressure and temperature.

The Pagasa's outdoor functioning center in Manila could also access the data transmitted to the PDCC.

Servando said the solar-powered monitoring stations would help communities and disaster management agencies in detecting, prepare and respond to flooding and other disasters and hopefully minimize damage.

"The system will be very useful to prevent flash floods," Servando said.

Hundreds died, thousands were left homeless and billions of pesos worth of property and infrastructure were destroyed as a deranged last year after Typhoon "Frank" triggered the worst flooding in Western Visayas.

Servando said the early warning and monitoring systems would guide the PDCC and concerned local responders to prepare for disasters and in making the necessary decisions and actions.

He said that response and mobilization of resources are equally important with getting advance and accurate data.

Science and Technology Secretary Estrella Alabastro and Korean Ambassador to the Philippines Kyung-chul led the inauguration ceremony held at the provincial capitol.

PROTESTERS from Davao region and Compostela Valley province condemn the use of aerial spraying of pesticides in banana plantations.

Stop aerial spraying of pesticides, health execs urge

DAVAO CITY—HEALTH OFFICIALS in Southern Mindanao have recommended a halt to aerial spraying in banana companies in the region, saying the practice is hazardous to the people's health.

Citing a study the Department of Health commissioned in 2007, health officials on Thursday said aerial spraying is also threatening the environment.

Dr. Allan Dionisio, principal investigator of the National Poison Management and Control Center, said it was their recommendation that aerial spraying of pesticides should be stopped.

"A shift to organic farming techniques should be considered," he said during a presentation of the study in the Pagoda Hotel here.

Also present during the presentation were local health and pesticides officials, executives of banana companies, environmental groups and local government officials.

Dionisio said the study conducted in Sitio Camocan in Barangay Palma in Hagonoy, Davao del Sur, and Barangay Balbagan in the same town, disclosed that aerial spraying was indeed causing the deterioration of the health of the residents.

Camocan is near a banana plantation operated by a company owned by former agriculture secretary Dev Lantayan's family while a mango plantation is located near Balbagan.

Dionisio said based on the study, many of the residents of the two villages suffer from rhinosinusitis, which is caused by organochlorine fungicides. This type of fungicides is being used in aerial spraying to combat the fungoids disease causing banana.

"Traces of fungicides were also detected in the blood of 34.3 percent of the people there and that it was also found in the air and soil," he said, quoting from the study.

Also present were 51 percent of the respondents in Camocan, who were indirectly exposed to aerial spraying, regularly experienced eye pain, headaches, eye redness and eye itchiness, while he said, are consistent with the acute effects of pesticides.

Dionisio said among the major findings of the study is that persistent birth in Camocan was three times the rate in Balbagan.

He said similar studies abroad corroborate their findings.

"It has been corroborated by other studies, pesticides have bad effects on people," he said.

But Hagonoy Mayor Pelagio Calida said residents of the villages mentioned in the study were fine and that they were not experiencing illnesses.

He said if there were indeed residents suffering from health problems, it could have been caused by other factors and not by the plantations.

"We should have a solid evidence to show that these (cases) came from direct spraying," Calida said.

He said the banana industry in the town is providing livelihood to residents.

"We are dismay. Foremost, our rule is to demonstrate the effect (of certain activities) on the population. We see that there is a problem," Dionisio said in response to Calida's reaction.

Dr. Mona Ramero de Guzon, chief of the DOH center for health development, said the government should adopt a "scientific based policy" to ensure that the health of people living near plantations is protected.

Among their recommendations are the establishment of health surveillance units to help detect chronic illnesses associated with pesticides, she said.

Last year, the Davao City council passed an ordinance banning aerial spraying in the city after a series of studies and consultations.

The ordinance was challenged by the Philippine Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) before the Court of Appeals (CA), citing economic downfall if it was not stopped.

The CA eventually issued an order against the ordinance.

The city government has since filed an appeal against the CA decision, with officials citing the case of Bukidnon, which credited aerial spray as its economic boon.

City officials said companies operating in Bukidnon, such as Del Monte Philippines, did not lose money when their aerial spraying activities were banned by the Bukidnon government a few years ago. *Dennis Jay Santos, Inquirer Mindanao*

Suspects behind Esperat slay get reprieve

TAGUBING CITY—THE SUSpected brains in the March 2005 murder of journalist Marlene Esperat got a temporary reprieve against arrests on Wednesday.

Prosecutor Al Cabos said the lawyers of Datucha Binandatan and Pamella Salang both barangay ranking agriculture officials in Central Mindanao, had filed a motion for reconsideration on Wednesday of an earlier court decision that ordered their arrest to quash the charges filed against them in connection with Esperat's slay.

Cabos said the 20th Regional Trial Court has to issue a decision first on the motion for reconsideration filed by the suspected busted lawyers.

Until then, the two suspects could not be arrested, he said.

"That is the pending motion for reconsideration filed by both Salang and Binandatan, the warrants of arrest for murder charges issued by Judge Wenceslao Inandan against them will not be carried out," he said.

Cabos said they were expecting the court to decide on the motion before May 21.

Binandatan, former finance officer of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Central Mindanao, and Salang, the agency's former accountant for the region, were identified by a former soldier as the ones who contracted him to have Esperat killed.

Hernie Barua, who sought people that could carry out the contract, was among the suspects arrested in connection with the Esperat murder case.

State witness

He later became a state witness and his testimonies led to the conviction by a Cebu court of ex-Sgt. Reynaldo Romarate, Gerry Cabagay, the confessed triggerman, and Randy Geola, who acted as lookout.

Binandatan and Salang consistently denied any role in the murder of Esperat, a lawyer DA employee, who later became a journalist.

It was Esperat, who blew the whistle on the multimillion-peso fertilizer scam that has implicated her own agency, Secretary Jocelyn "Joc-Joc" Bolante.

Petna Quinsayan of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines said the delay in the arrest of the suspected masterminds also means a delay in the resolution of the Esperat case.

"Their arraignment, such as to other suspects, is the turning point in any criminal case," she said.

The Fund for Filipino Journalists said it would like to see the hunting of the case against Binandatan and Salang moved to another place. *Carlo Aquirre, Inquirer Mindanao*

Mining board stops mountain quarry of tourism developer

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—THE Provincial Mining and Regulatory Board (PMRB) has issued a cease-and-desist order against an ongoing onetime conversion project in San Vicente, northern Palawan, for alleged illegal quarrying activity.

The board released Thursday the order issued May 7. Following its investigation of a land development project on a planned marina yacht club being undertaken by Bandung Casablan Properties, reportedly an area of investment giant Big Foot Entertainment.

It pointed out that the company is leveling an entire hill to fill in the property being developed for the project without a permit from the provincial mining body.

Giant earth-moving equipment have been leveling an entire hill to fill up a former fishpond where the project will be undertaken, it noted.

The PMRB resolution cited in earlier order requiring all local government units, contractors and developers to secure a permit from the provincial government for any quarrying activity.

Also Puerto Mayor Antonio Gonzales facilitated to remove the order directing the local government unit to implement the cease-and-desist order, saying he has yet to see a copy of the order.

Gonzales earlier noted that Big Foot Entertainment, along with the Andres Soriano Group, is the major investors who have yet to make investments in property acquisition and development in support of the municipality's push for tourism development.

The Bandung group has secured an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for the project, which includes the development of facilities such as two condominium buildings, a recreational area, cottages, parking area and club house.

While the project has been issued an ECC, however, PMRB member Renario Aurat explained that the company still needed to secure a quarry permit from the provincial government.

"An ECC is not a license to quarry. They need to secure a permit for that mountain quarrying," Aurat said. *Bulentgito D. Abeda, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

THE QUARRY site in Brgy Panindigan, San Vicente peninsula, Palawan, where an order to halt is being lavished in preparation for a yacht club project.

INQUIRER Visayas

A sanctuary for Leyte's 'tikling'

By Ricarte Labra
Tacloban City

IN ITS OWN LITTLE WAYS, A SCHOOL IN THE CITY is doing its share to save the environment and to address some of the impacts of climate change.

The University of the Philippines Visayas Tacloban College (UPVTC) has recently inaugurated what could be the first of its kind in the country—a sanctuary for the tallbird, locally known as 'tikling.'

An indigenous bird that is small, long-legged and with long neck, the 'tikling' is usually seen in rice paddies, wetlands and grasslands in the country.

Some people hunt the "tikling" for food, but its thinness renders them as pets and kill them because they eat tomato rice plants.

Top officials of the university led by Dr. Windu J. Fernandez, UP Visayas chancellor, and Dr. Virginia R. Salcedo, dean of UPVTC, graced the inauguration.

UPVTC alumni student regent Shaina E. Abdulwahid and UPVTC Alumni Association president George Tupas were also among those who attended the occasion.

In the inauguration April 30 of the 'Tikling Garden,' which is a project of UPVTC's Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (DNSM), two tallbirds coming from two different towns were initially released.

Prof. Margarita de la Cruz, who chairs the DNSM, said the sanctuary would serve as 'tikling in-store' 'tikling' birds coming from other Leyte towns.

"We are getting 'tikling' from different towns so that there would also be genetic variation [of the birds inside the sanctuary]," explained Dr. de la Cruz, who conceptualized the "tikling" sanctuary project.

The garden

A plastic fence encloses the 120-square-meter Tikling Garden, which is located just behind the Regional Instructional Information Systems (RIIS) office. The RIIS financed the construction of the garden, which has a fishpond, concrete pathway and some new plants. The project costs about P140,000, said Dr. de la Cruz.

"Eventually, we like an ecosystem," Dr. de la Cruz, who also heads the R&E unit of the school, "It can attract birds, butterflies and dragonflies and at the same time add to the aesthetics."

Years later, when the plants have completely developed, Dr. de la Cruz said, they would not replant the trees anymore. "By then, the 'tikling' birds would be free to roam around the campus grounds," she said.

Last year, the UPVTC declared the entire campus as bird and butterfly sanctuary as part of the university's commitment to climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation.

Dr. de la Cruz disclosed that the tallbirds found in the UPVTC campus have fascinated her, the reason she chose to undertake the 'tikling' sanctuary project.

She said the "tikling" fascinates her as she would constantly hear the birds chirp just outside the windows of her office. She would open the window hoping to get a glimpse of the birds, but they are rare visible because they roam beneath the grasses or thickets as they seek for food.

"So, you can hear them but you can't see them," she said.

Unfortunately, the school administration ordered the cleaning of vegetation in the place near the office of Dr. de la Cruz, for fear that snakes lurking in the area would bite passing students. The "tikling" in that area disappeared, the UP professor lamented.

'Tinikling'

Another thing that made her like the "tikling" was the thought that the tallbirds had inspired early people in Leyte to create the "tinikling," a dance that later became popular in the country and even abroad.

"Tinikling" dancers imitate the tallbird's movements as they try to evade bamboo traps.

At first she thought that "tallking" was of Tagalog origin but after she learned that it started in Leyte, she became more determined to set up the "tikling" sanctuary, Dr. de la Cruz said.

She admitted though that she did not know if the "tikling" is an endangered species, as there has been no study made on the bird.

But since the tallbird is being hunted for food, it might soon become endangered, she added.

"Whatever is hunted for food, eventually disappears," she said.

Salcedo, meanwhile, revealed that aside from setting up the sanctuaries, the university would create wetlands on new planting as part of its commitment to save the environment.

The state university here would soon be growing indigenous trees in their project in partnership with the Energy Development Corp. it realized, he disclosed.

They earlier learned that the EDC has a "program of greening the country and at the same time preserving and multiplying the number of indigenous trees in the country."

The EDC will identify the indigenous trees while UP Tacloban will serve as the nursery for the tree seedlings.

"Eventually, if we have enough trees, we will connect other schools to give us also a space for indigenous tree nurseries," Salcedo said.

He added that the UPVTC still has some space for tree planting which could later be planted with indigenous trees like "yakal" and "kamagong."

"To reduce the points in the environment, we have to plant trees," Salcedo said.

THE TIKLING

THE TIKLING. Senior at the UP Visayas, Tacloban College in Tacloban.

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Holistic effort vs piracy needed

MORE THAN A HUNDRED SEAFARERS remain are being held hostage by Somali pirates. Every day they agonize whether they'll be able to see their families again. Still, every day, we see at the Plaza, some Filipino seafarers burdening himself to their loved ones, praying with them for lifeline protection.

What was once a scary family meeting made bearable by thoughts of earning enough to be able to provide for the needs of the family, especially a brighter future for the children, has become a heartbreaking and worrisome episode to every seaman's life—and a nightmare for those who find hearty or are still being held captive by the pirates.

The courage of our valiant Filipino seamen in the face of these threats and grim risks are withheld. Ours is also the honor of being recognized among the world's best mariners, and thus we make our country proud. Moreover, we take seriously our role in transporting products and raw materials from country to country and in keeping the economies of the world moving.

It is in hope to meet all the plights of Filipino seafarers be continually addressed, especially the problem of piracy attacks. Once at sea, we are left to fend for ourselves against these sea pirates. We have adopted many measures to guard off potential assaults, such as evading suspected pirate boats that appear on our radar screens; posting additional lookouts or using state of the art communication and satellite systems. But all of these are just palliative measures and may not be enough and effective all the time.

We appreciate the efforts of our government in the shipping industry, the United Nations and the United States to stop piracy. We urge that these efforts be continued. Besides, it might just be cheapest to maximize a fleet of patrol boats, air stations, or gun ships along the pirate infested waters than to carry multimillion-dollar ransoms that usually end up the firepower of the pirates and make them more aggressive.

We also hope that all the stakeholders in the maritime industry will look at the root causes of the problem and come up with more holistic solutions that would concretely take into consideration the safety and welfare of all seamen, Filipinos and non-Filipinos alike.

The world is still reeling from the impact of an economic crisis. Piracy is one big obstacle to trade recovery. We thank all seamen that continue working to put a stop to piracy.

—JUANITO MAGANTE JR., jun.magante21@yahoo.com

DMIA's radar system 'most modern' in Philippines

THIS IS IN REACTION TO MAL Cruz's May 11 column specifically that portion on the lack of radar systems in our country's airports.

The Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) is the Clark Freeport Zone in Pampanga is proud that it operates its own state-of-the-art Terminal Radar Approach Control (Tracon) system.

Developed at a cost of $9.3 million, this modern radar system was activated by President Macapagal-Arroyo on April 6, 2007 and inside the Clark airport, globally competitive and the safest and most reliable airport not only in the Philippines but throughout the Asian region.

DMIA's Tracon is billed as the "most modern in the country" and has elevated the status of the airport in Clark, which is now on par with its neighboring Asian airports. DMIA, for a time, shared the radar system of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). However, with the operation of its own Tracon, DMIA is no longer dependent on the Nain radar system. The advanced technology system can detect incoming and outgoing aircraft within a radius of 60 to 220 nautical miles, and it operates 24/7.

The DMIA primary radar can detect aircraft within a radius of 60 nautical miles at an altitude of 27,000 feet, while the secondary radar is capable of determining the speed and position of aircraft with in 120 nautical miles at an altitude of 33,000 feet, higher than the altitude usually flown by long haul airliners which is 33,000 feet.

Incoming and outgoing traffic can rely on the technically advanced system that will enable air traffic controllers to issue safe and approved instructions to aircraft in zero-visibility situations and bad weather conditions. This capability to ensures the safety of passenger aircraft.

The radar system has also sped up boarding, departure and air traffic at the DMIA. The installation and operation of DMIA's Tracon completes the navigational and surveillance of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

—NESTOR KREL LUCIANO, president and CEO, Clark International Airport Corporation, Clark Civil Aviation Complex, Clark Freeport, Pampanga

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LETTERS

Youth group says no alien should own lands in RP

OUR CONGRESS IS NOW IN THE process of approving House Resolution 7107 that would loosen up allow foreigners to own land and allow their full participation in the exploitation of our natural resources and public utilities. We, the Youth Progressive Unity for Nationalist Orientation, strongly denounce this totally reprehensible act.

Land is an essential property of the people for it contains our very own minerals and natural resources. It is also where we put up our offices and factories and our very homes. More than that, our land belongs to us by birthright. Considering the financial problems plaguing the majority of our people, and the buying power of the foreigners, especially the super wealthy globalists who will take advantage of this amendment to the Constitution, the 60-percent rule may one day wake up to see that they have no land anymore in their own country.

We cannot emphasize enough the evil of this resolution because the highest immorality in a country is for its political and economic leadership to give away its natural and human resources, thereby enslaving the future of its children.

We are absolutely sick and tired of being the generation that willingly let the economic chaos and political crisis, which we had nothing to do with in the first place. And we will not let our future be more jeopardized than it already is. We will fight Resolution 7107 for we are fighting for ourselves and future generations. To the protestors at 7107: Please stop deceiving the Filipino people.

—CHEEE UDJO, chair, Youth Progressive Unity for Nationalist Orientation, cudjo1992@yahoo.co.uk

Rina got inaccurate info from PKKK

THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO RINA Jimenez-David's May 10 column, where she accepted "lock, stock and barrel" an inaccurate and distorted report from the Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK), a rural women's organization. The group alleged that 1 in 5 among the "reproductive ages" risk of rural women is terminating certain entertainers in Sec. 5 Gender Responsive Support Services of the pending House bill that would amend the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

Based on the record of the House bill/senate wording group (SWG) that deliberated on this and other sections of the CARP bill, it is clear that all TWG members and observers recognized the vital role of rural women, in terms of their contributions in agriculture of production, as well as to the management and care of their homes and families.

However, I expressed reservations on the use of the word "reproductive" to describe the household and family-based work of rural women. I therefore proposed the following reformulation of the sec and paragraph of Sec. 5 (amendments are in capital letters, while deleted words are in parentheses):

"Rural women shall refer to women who perform productive (and/or reproductive) AGRICULTURAL AND/OR HOUSEHOLD/FAMILY-BASED labor, INCLUDING FISHERFOLK AND FARM MANAGEMENT, OR WOMEN WHO ARE engaged either directly or indirectly in farming and/or fishing as their source of livelihood, whether paid or unpaid, regular or seasonal. (Reproductive labor refers to care provided by rural women necessary for productive work like food preparation, managing the household, caring for the children, etc.)."

I believe that this version addresses adequately the concerns of the NGO authors, specifically on recognizing and supporting the varied roles of rural women; at the same time, it avoids terminology that may give rise to unnecessary controversy over an effective inclusion of legislation.

The report (which included my reformulation) was approved unanimously by the TWG, (which was composed of representatives from government, farmers' organizations, landowners, non-government organizations and the academe).

In closing, please allow me to state that, as a present senior representative in the 10th Congress, I am categorically responsible for Presidential Proclamation 1189, declaring every 15th day of October "National Rural Women's Day," in recognition of rural women's many bold contributions to our nation.

—LEONARDO A. MONTEMAYOR, party-list representative, 4BAHAY, dyanong kayanihan ng mga Maparaan, kinagisnang-bukid at Maagap para sa Kalikasan at Kilusan ng Ordinaryong Tao

Mao only restated a Marx original

THIS IS TO RECTIFY THE CLAIM in a letter titled "Religion is poison to (one's) spiritual addiction," (Opinion, 5/5/09).

The letter began with the statement that "when Mao Zedong said 'Religion is the opium of the people,' it is like saying that Carlsbad is a city in Czechoslovakia for the famous mineral."

Mao was born in 1893 and died in 1976.

Mao could have said that "Religion is the opium of the people," but we believe he got this line from the writings of Karl Marx who, together with another German named Friedrich Engels, wrote the "Communist Manifesto," a pamphlet on socialism.

We fear that the letter might create a lasting impression on the uninformed that it was the Chinese revolutionary who coined the phrase.

It was coined by a German named Karl Marx, (1818-1883) in his work, "Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right," which appeared in 1844. A year after his death and nine years before Mao was born.

—RAMON BATAUA, OnMayaya@aol.com

dti Gabay sa pamimili ng school supplies

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE & INDUSTRY PHILIPPINES

COMPOSITION NOTEBOOKS

BRAND	# of leaves	Type of paper	PRICE
Kids w/ margin	80	lined	P9.75
Santiago Trip	80	lined	P10.50
Mardi (w/plastic cover)	80	lined	P11.00
Bright Notes (w/ margin)	80	lined	P11.00
Consolidated	80	lined	P12.00

WRITING NOTEBOOKS

Consolidated Paper (Cute Bears)	80	lined	P9.75
Consolidated Paper (Funmate & Cartoons)	80	lined	P9.75
Topline ABC Notebooks	80	bond	P11.00
Consolidated Paper (Hot Colours)	80	lined	P11.00
Mardi (w/plastic cover)	80	lined	P11.00

SPIRAL NOTEBOOKS

Neon Spiral Notebook	80	assorted	P16.00
Mardi	80	Bond	P11.00
Topline (Little pals, Wish Spiral)	80	lined	P11.00
Consolidated Paper (Battle B-Damon)	80	lined	P11.00
Topline (Sis Dilly, Sunflower)	80	lined	P13.00

GRADE 1 TO 4 PAD PAPER

BRAND	# of leaves	Type of paper	PRICE
NDS Basics	80	bond book	P9.00 P10.00
Knowledge	80	bond	P9.00
Mardi	80	bond	P10.00
Easywrite	80	bond	P10.00
Best Buy	80	bond	P11.00
QBS (LOJA)	80	book	P11.25
Best Buy	80	book	P12.50

INTERMEDIATE PAD

Fortune	80	bond	P15.00
NBS Basic's	80	bond	P15.50
Spiral	80	bond	P17.00
Best Buy	80	bond	P18.00

PENCIL

BRAND	PRICE
Best Buy 3's	P 8.75
Chingy 1 and 2 (3s)	P11.75
Loonie Kids 1 and 2 (3s)	P12.50
902-1 and 2 Stwedler (3s)	P16.75
Mongol Trio	P19.75

Kadalasan nag-iiba ang presyo ng notebooks at pad papers depende sa dilang ng partisa at kalidad ng papel.

SA PAGBILI NG SCHOOL SUPPLIES, HANAPIN ANG MGA SUMUSUNOD SA LABEL:

1. Para sa notebooks at grade school pads – bilang ng pahina; klase ng papel (book, bond o newsprint); trade mark; pangalan at address ng manufacturer, importer at bansang pinanggalingan (kung imported).
2. Sa BOX ng CRAYONS, dapat nakasaad ang: pangalan ng produkto; trademark; bilang ng crayons sa box (box of 8, 16, 24, etc.); pangalan ng manufacturer o distributor at address; mga salitang "non-toxic" na nagpapatunay na ito ay sasuri at nakapasa sa "allowed toxicity level" na itinakda ng Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD); at bansa kung saan ginawa / bansang pinanggalingan (kung imported).
3. Para sa lapis hanapin ang registered brand name at trademark; hardness symbol (1,2,3); at "Made in the Philippines" o bansa kung saan ginawa ang produkto / bansang pinanggalingan (kung imported).
4. Ang mga erasers ay hindi dapat nakasisira ng papel at hindi nag-iiwan ng madumingmarka.

Kung may katanungan o reklamo sa kalidad o presyo ng mga school supplies, mag-report sa DTI Direct 751-3330 o mag-text kay Secretary Favila sa 09179063473. Maaari ring magsadya sa pinakamalapit na opisina ng DTI sa inyong lugar.

dti direct

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Statistics for scientific advocacy

IN ITS SLOGAN, "STATISTICS FOR ADVOCACY," the December Statistics is referring to scientific advocacy, not propaganda-oriented advocacy.

SWS is a non-stock, non-profit research institution—not a "firm" or a "company"—engaged in scientific work, not public relations. Its mission is to generate high-quality survey data for the education and benefit of social scientists in particular, and the public in general, in promoting meaningful development in the country.

The June SWS indicators. SWS doesn't know what the findings will be until after a survey is conducted. What it does know is the questions to do. In particular, its policy is to measure core socio-indicators each quarter, including: poverty, hunger, perceived past/future trends in personal quality of life, public satisfaction with the performance of top officials (the president, vice president, Senate president, speaker, and chief justice), and institutions like "national administration," the Senate, House of Representatives, Supreme Court, and the Cabinet as a whole, and evaluation of households by common crimes (home burglary, robbery, carnapping in the home, "car bugging," and physical violence).

Such indicators are not paid for by anyone, their costs are effectively shouldered by the sponsors of other items in the Social Weather Survey, which is a national survey omnibus, in much the same way that in the US, the costs of network news are in effect shouldered by its advertisers.

The definition of the core indicators are kept unchanged, so that comparisons over time will be valid. Updated results are regularly released to the public, whether they are good or bad for the administration, to the opposition, or to any other group.

SWS has no intention of springing surprises on the government. This is revealed now that five previous rights in many institutions have been assigned to Pantawid Pamilya (DSS), which gets more resources from government and other sources, and publishes their findings.

Last March 30th, we visited Cinda Director-General Ralph Recto for the specific purpose of shooting him, confidentially, our second high (46.2 per cent) unemployment rate for February 2009, which SWS published last Thursday: there is a photo in the SWS website. Secretary Recto found the data relevant to his proposal for unemployment insurance.

Tracking unemployment. The SWS survey question on employment is: "Are you working at present, not working but used to, or have you never worked?" For this simple question, the time reference is exhaustive: it is consistently understood by the Filipino citizens "in kasalukuyan." Then those presently not working are asked if they are looking for work or else planning to establish a business; those existing, to survey the unemployed.

With these two questions, unfortunately since September 1991, SWS has surveyed unemployment 63 times. In 48 surveys from 1995 up to March 2008, unemployment ranged between 3.4 and 19.2 percent. In 28 of these surveys it was in single digits, and in 20 it was in double digits. So there was no special tendency for the methodology to produce overly high unemployment rates. On many occasions, in fact, the DOLE unemployment rate was lower than the official rate. From the 1995 surveys were the populations 18 years old and up (reference for official Labor Force Surveys [LFS] were people 15 years old and up.)

The SWS unemployment percentage reached the 20s for the first time (20.3) in May 2000. In 15 surveys from May 2000 to February 2009, the percentage was below 20 only twice, in 2004 and 2007 (19.8 times. In other words, the SWS rates have been signaling severe unemployment for the past several years already.

The official LFS, for its part, asks a number of questions to determine unemployment. The first is "Did ... do any work at all (even for only one hour "kahapon nang ... ?)" during the past week?" This strikes me, incidentally, as an extremely low threshold for graduating people into the ranks of the employed. How many people, without a regular job, can afford to pass up every opportunity to earn a single peso?

If the one-hour-a-week rule doesn't succeed in classifying a person as "employed," the LFS' second question is: "Although ... did not work, did have a job or business during the past week?" The third is: "Were You Not Working Because" Many of people employed are not losing as much "on the phone on strike," a person temporarily laid off due to non-economic reasons like machine breakdown, agreement with some job or begin within two weeks from the date of interview, regular and temporary teachers, on-hiring substitutes, during summer vacation who will resume pay and expect to go back to either jobs in the next school year." Inclusive pushing into such cases will result in classifying more respondents as employed.

The fourth question is: "Did you or those still unclassified as working, as "Did ... look for work at any time during the past week?" Those who did look are called unemployed; those who didn't look are asked a fourth question: "Why did ... not look for work?" Those without reasons for not looking are considered unemployed. Those who say that they're "waiting" to "looking" as a necessary condition for being unemployed. This means that those looking for work but who cannot accept a job now, if an opening materializes, are not considered unemployed. The new DOLE report says that unemployment increases 20.9 percent if the "waiting" group is included.

Contact SWS: www.sws.org.ph or mahar@sws.gov.ph@sws.org.ph.

SOCIAL CLIMATE

Mahar Mangahas

Our (summer) 'Tree'

IN OUR BACKYARD, WE HAVE A LOVELY MANGO TREE. It's not too tall, it's from a bit and is just plenty of branches, so that a child can easily step on one branch to another to get to the top. Every summer, it bears juicy mangoes. I believe, until now, it still bears quite popular among our friends in the neighborhood. When we were younger, our school was out, we usually spend our

YOUNG BLOOD

Mia Gonzon Arroyo

We want to know what the young people think about the issues of the day—their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twenty-something set below—16.6.

afternoons climbing up those graceful and sturdy branches to pick its fruits and spend a hot summer day under its slender crowning of emerald adventures.

Often, we would imagine our "Tree" to be a ship. My younger sister, my playmates and I would each take our posts on the branches and pretend we were sailors off it sea. We would take this island's bounty in full count and use them as advantages to check for other approaching ships. We were particularly wary of pirates who might creep behind us and seize our precious vessel. Fortunately, we never met the Black Flag bearing the notorious skull and crossbones. Our ship always survived battling against a thunderstorm. Our ship violently rocked in an effort to defy the raging tempest. As valiant sailors, we stood our ground and tried to save our ship. But time had a different plan for us. As soon as we heard my eldest sister call us for snacks, we all followed her.

When we were not at sea, we were traversing the backyard routes on our quest for treasures. We started from the garden in front of our house, strolled down and further, and made our way toward the Tree where the "X" on our sketched map marked the spot. But it always proved to be a long and perilous journey. Monsters and soldiers would intercept along the way. We courageously fought against them. We slew the beasts with our twig swords. For the soldiers, we used magic stones to banish them forever from the face of the earth. The stones were gifts from a powerful sorcerer (Santa?), who believed we had juice heads to win the war against evil and to win the treasure for good. Upon reaching the Tree, we excitedly began to count our steps to determine where to dig. Five steps and we dropped to the ground and dug up a small shoe box containing an assortment of toys. That was our treasure.

One summer, we had new additions to our park. Our dog gave birth to seven puppies. We were so excited that for some time, we forgot about our adventures. We played puppies then climbing up the Tree. We dearly loved our tiny friends, we didn't care how much we itched from hugging them and getting kisses by their fleas. I believe the boys even rolled around the dirt with them. She, the girls, on the other hand, took out our school bag stroller and strapped a basket banner on it. We then put our puppies in the basket and pushed them around the backyard as if they were babies or patients. It was a blissful summer, but for the death of our puppy.

We couldn't understand how he died. When we came to pry them from their mommy's embrace that fateful morning, we noticed he wasn't moving anymore. We felt so sad and mourned for our loss. We decided to give him a proper burial. We buried him under the Tree and placed flowers on his tomb. Then we grabbed flowers from Lolo's (grandmother's) garden and died it into a simple bouquet. When all was set, we lined up and marched solemnly toward the Tree. We became pallbearers that day for our puppy friend. We buried him by the Tree so he could always be with us when we played.

Once the summer was over, a number of puppies by the Tree. And as we all grew up, I guess, we didn't have only our dogs. Three of our friends moved to a different neighborhood. One went with a new husband, My siblings and I were left looking out through the window, staring in a silent hush—our hearts deserted. Two. Sometimes, I felt like our backyard had turned into a desert. Sometimes we'd see the children who filled it with so much life and color.

Today, our Tree still stands and continues to bear fruits. However, unlike before, it no longer abounds with mangoes. She also seems to bend more—not to cradle children in her arms, but because she has grown tired with age. Her branches have become brittle and dangerous to step on. I believe she has rapidly aged during those years she spent alone and lonely. The children she dearly enjoyed to have climbing up her arms never came back to play.

Three summers ago when I picked some mangoes from her, I noticed drops of sap leaves on her branches. I imagined how much pain she must be feeling. Last summer, I noticed growing sap, so have she entered to different phases. Some of our friends have migrated to the United States. They are now in college. My oldest sister and I are now working in Singapore. My other siblings are still in Manila. All are busy with work and elementary studies. Also, she has I heard about one of our friends now has her pet nine dogs, constructed pretty stuff, and was complicated.

These days, when summer comes, I always remember the Tree and all the happy days when we innocently created a world of our own, playing on her branches. And as soon as I find myself caught in such events, I wonder if the day would come when I can bring my children again around the Tree to say hello and thank her for everything. She may have grown old and bent, but to us she will always be the Tree who witnessed our carefree days as children, the Tree who gave us comfort when we first lost a friend to death, the Tree who kept the key to our secret gates of imagination, the Tree which will always be Our Tree.

Mia Gonzon Arroyo, 27, is a journalism graduate who wants to do more creative writing in the future.

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An 'Education Nation' for our young

BEING ADULTS WITH YEARS OF SCHOOLING behind us, we are probably more concerned with other pressing issues like the global economic meltdown and the coming 2010 elections. Prior dental segments will certainly clamor for public attention, if they have not done so already.

Education reform is a critical issue but it can quite easily be relegated to the back burner because it requires a long-term commitment entailing a consensus-driven multistep process. Moreover, its results are not immediately discernible. In the 21st century era of quick fixes and drive solutions, capturing the public's imagination and getting its sustained support have been very challenging for long-term programs.

Our children and young people still inherit the world we made for them, and quite soon. They will need new kinds of skills and competencies to prepare for what is now known as the global village. That requires access to quality schools where skills and competencies for life and for the workplace will be nurtured—with all the imperfections and frailties.

Can we really do something about our patently weak education system? Most definitely.

The results of a big history of reform efforts to guide us are there.

At the UP Centennial lectures delivered by Doctors Cynthia Bautista, Dina Ocampo and Alan Bernardo, they described the "seasons of reform" and the accompanying frameworks that have emerged in the last 20 years, ranging from the overemphasized quality of basic education pushed by Sen. Edgardo Angara and then Commissioner Bobby de Dios to the current basic education sector reform Agenda or Sonza.

We even know that a top dozen or 15 from the 180 existing or soon-to-be-existing SUCs are truly centers for higher learning. Their qualifications are the same—let's all policy-will not work.

Quite a few critics point out that the key to success is political will.

Professor Raul Moreno cited that when he was in power, the level of political will and the military might to enforce it. He issued Presidential

COMMENTARY

Andrew Hernandez

Decree 1 on Sept. 24, 1972 and 191 64 five days later, directly ordering a reorganized bureaucracy to implement martial law rule and the Philippine economic development and social programs. Moreno thought that he could literally force the education system to qualitatively improve, and at the same time nail his presidency plan "to make the nation great again."

His plan did not work. By the time his tables stamp Secretary Pandanan executed Batas Pambansa 232 (also known as the Education Act of 1982) during the dictatorship's waning years to hopefully remedy the situation, the Filipino people were more than fed up with Marcos' excesses.

Education is a very complex set of interdependent issues. The UP Centennial lectures however emphasize that "in educational systems that have been transformed successfully, the design and implementation of the reforms were guided by the strong exercise of leadership and the influence of the highest possible form. All specific reform activities such as designing alternative learning experiences, assessment systems, teacher development, educational management processes are supportive of the very fundamental goals of the reform initiative."

Meanwhile, Dr. Mario Taguiwalo of the National Institute of Policy Studies would like us to consider the following basic education interventions:

1. Get all children ready for school by age 5 using a wide variety of early childhood care and development interventions at home, communities and institutions.

2. Lengthen the basic education cycle to 12 years so our students have more time to absorb what is being taught.

3. Implement an effective mother language education to achieve early mastery of literacy skills before the children's transition to national and English language education.

4. Decentralize the system to school and community levels.

5. Institutionalize community involvement in education governance and accountability.

6. Emphasize teaching competencies associated to child learning rather than accumulation of credentials, often during teacher training.

7. Modernize education administration and facilities using cost-effective and appropriate technologies.

8. We must ensure consistent compliance with basic standards in our education provisions to all constituencies.

9. Private education options at all levels must be nurtured as an essential complement to our public education system.

10. Higher education programs and institutions must be financed based on proven performance indicators on critical aspects of higher education competencies.

I have other insights/observations/elements to accomplished maximum planning in a jazz orchestra, harmonizing in a symbiotic fine and embellishing it with appropriate improvisations. Let's all participate in setting "improving student learning" is our melody line and we really don't need to play in unison.

Mr. Jacques Delors, the chair of the International Commission for Education to the 21st Century put it beautifully when he said "Education is a treasure full of offers for the children and young people, where we need to welcome into society harmoniously offering them the place that a theirs by right therein—a place in the educational system, to be sure, but also in the family, the local community and the nation."

If it can, on Monday, May 18 some join us as we launch Education Nation at the UP Ateneo auditorium.

Andy Hernandez (andhernandez@gmail.com) is the executive director of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power.

A Philippine team for health and wellness

ABOUT 30 YEARS AGO, PATIENTS FROM THE Philippines traveled to the United States and Europe for quality health care and treatment. Today the tide has turned. Asia is now a major destination for those who seek value for money and high quality health care services.

Philippine Medical Tourism now in the health and wellness (HWP) market. Some local hospitals and clinics have been treating foreign patients and holidaymakers for decades. The volume may be relatively small in comparison with those of our neighbors, but we have a strategic value proposition. Our country has the potential to be a superpower of our component and cutting health professionals. There is really a huge preference for Filipino health workers globally. Let's entice the market to appreciate compassionate and culturally sensitive, high-value-added for being quality health care by Filipino health professionals in the homeland.

The global HWP industry is estimated to be more than $40 billion and expected to rise to $100 billion by 2015. Competition is intense, but good for the clusters of inter-connected HWP industries—health-spa care, specialty clinics, wellness centers and retirement care. Global competition has driven hospitals to invest in facilities, process and people. Their local and foreign patient base has expanded as a result of improved services and better image.

Competition among countries battery excellence within and among these clusters. But for our country and people to generate and enjoy the benefits of investments, value added, multiplier effects, and employment opportunities, a public private partnership (PPP) approach is needed to speed implementation. It is only through the convergence of interests of the public and private sectors that the interlinking between the supply and market chains of the HWP clusters will be achieved.

Beyond its support in enticing customers and facilitating the delivery of health services, PPP must be the full convergence of its forces and resources in addressing some key issues. The wellness concept is not yet very appreciated in our society. There is a setback of experience among national and local policies. While centers continue to be established in many cities and municipalities under the Institution Code, which does not allow visiting employee things in this sector. Institutional or carriers are also restricted to enhance connectivity and pursue long-term plans due to the higher costs of doing business (e.g., airport-related and transport taxes). Our transport and tourism infrastructures have barely improved. The low prices by the U.S. D is evidenced in our inability to competitively produce a variety of spa wellness products given our resource diversity. We lack a critical mass of local government units with enabling policies that provide special investment promotions and service facilitation units that would serve investors and enterprises. Hence, the low ranking of the Philippines among the countries that compete for the fast-growing market.

Collaboration on a PPP basis will help address issues such as accreditation, equity, investors portability and human resource development. In medical tourism, should providers be internationally accredited to become globally competitive? Yes. This safeguards our commitment to quality. It facilitates attracting clients of medical insurance firms. Should local facilities be required to accredited. Consumers International accreditation is equally for fixed incentives and inclusion in programs? There are other organizations such as the United States Joint Commission Canada that perform a similar role and in our region, a number of public health care systems are granted international accreditation. Our goal is a two-fold: to seek international recognition and accreditation of our hard systems (e.g., Philhealth) by the International Society for Quality in Health Care and to effectively communicate the high quality care by accredited providers. Understand that several countries in the world—Asia, Australia, Canada can set local accreditation bodies.

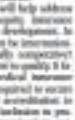
Some facilities and providers already have their own programs—monthly medical missions, subsidies to charity patients—to address equity. But government and the private partners should involve the poor and organize low-cost preventive or enhanced groups of communities of the supply in market chains. A PPP approach can tap public and private financial institutions to fund projects that are backed up by purchase orders from HMO businesses and their support or refinancing. A convergence must clearly delineate the responsibilities and missions of its agencies to gain support from the private sector. Does Invest HWP a test the solution to our local health woes not should it be rejected due to possible risks. Risk management and mitigation measures should be in place to make the programs sustainable.

Election time is around the corner. Despite the changing of the guard, we need to continue with the successful initiatives and to make fragmented progress.

The Health and Wellness Task Force under EO 372 should continue, on a PPP approach, to define the policies and monitor implementation. Moving forward, we can consider various models like Singapore Medicine, but my bias is for private sector-driven than government-to-drive and lead this growth engine, although government must provide the policy environment to ensure private sector growth.

Rizalino S. Navarro's book, By Health and Wellness and Are for under EO 372, Public Private Task Force on Globally Competitive Service Industries. Email: rsnavarro@dti.gov.ph.

BUSINESS MATTERS



Rizalino S. Navarro

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Send your contribution by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

THEY SAID

Genuine prayer

"Christ is indeed here. There is more repentance and genuine prayer here than outside. More sharing, more brotherhood and camaraderie."

—Ayn Rand, in the letter to the Soviet Ambassador to Australia upon leaving

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OPINION

A nation of idiots

EDITORIAL

EITHER THE DISTINGUISHED OFFICIALS OF THE Bureau of Customs and the Department of Finance think it is an objective of the Arroyo administration to turn the country into a nation of idiots, or they think we have already taken that turn some time ago. Finance Secretary Margarito Teves' controversial Department Order No. 17-09, drafted and issued based on the recommendation of a soothing group under Undersecretary Estela Valdez, imposes new restrictions on the importation of books into the Philippines. These restrictions are unconstitutional, violative of international law—and against the country's best interests.

We assume that it is in the country's best interests to form a thinking citizenry, because democracy, if it is to endure in the new century, requires the highly informed consent of the governed. It must be in the country's best interests, therefore, to encourage the easy traffic in ideas that the duty-free importation of books makes possible.

Even if our quota-fixated economic managers do not share this basic outlook, however, there is still the law to reckon with. And on the level of the fundamental law of international law and of ordinary law, Department Order No. 17-09 is a mark violation.

What, exactly, does Department Order No. 17-09 do? First, it makes an appalling distinction between imports classified as "educational, technical, scientific, historical or cultural books/materials" for non-profit purposes (which can be brought into the country without duties), and the same class of imports that are "for sale, barter or hire" (which will now be levied a 3-percent duty).

Second, it makes an avaricious distinction between all other books and "books or raw materials to be used in book publishing" (which, under the DOF's squint-eyed reading of the Book Publishing Industry Development Act of 1995 or RA 8047, will be the only class of imported books not charged to extra duty).

These distinctions, and the new restrictions they lend to, violate the Constitution, because they privilege a mere order of an executive department over congressional legislation—in this case, RA 8047. What the 1995 law did was to simplify the regulatory framework governing the book industry; in doing so, it dramatically expanded the scope of the duty-free importation of books which has been in force in the country since 1952.

One of the dynamic interventions in RA 8047 was to expand the coverage of the landmark Florence Agreement, to include all imported books. What Department Order No. 17-09 has done, however, is to greedily narrow the scope of duty-free importation, not only beyond the interventions of RA 8047 but even beyond the reservations of the Florence Agreement itself.

The DOF order thus also violates international law—in particular, the Unesco's Florence Agreement—by limiting the zero-duty classification to "educational, technical, scientific, historical or cultural books/materials" imported for non-profit purposes. This is an appalling distinction, because it largely negates the spirit of the Agreement (which is to encourage, in the wake of a catastrophic world war scarred by totalitarian governments, the free flow of information and a free market of ideas). And as any informed citizen knows, the international covenants the Philippine government enters into have the force of law in the Philippines.

Department Order No. 17-09 is also legally invalid because it deliberately misreads a key provision—offering incentives for book development—in RA 8047. The clause "In the case of tax and duty-free importation of books or raw materials to be used in book publishing" the legal luminaries at the DOF and the BOC have chosen to interpret as narrowing the scope of the duty-free incentive to "books to be used by book publishing." This is an absurd construction of the obvious meaning of the law, and can be justified only if the DOF and BOC officials deliberately wanted their thinking caps before they enter the assessor's office.

Time for publishers, book readers and democracy's defenders to throw the book (legally, if not quite literally) at them.

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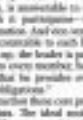
Subsidiarity

PUBLIC LIVES



Randy David

IF YOU TYPE THE WORD "SUBSIDIARITY" on the computer, chances are it will be red-lined by the word processor, signifying its non-recognition as a term. The word is not listed in most dictionaries. Yet, it appears extensively in the social teachings of the Catholic Church. It is also a key concept in the European Union's draft constitution. A political idea of long standing, subsidiarity has recently gained new prominence, chiefly as a cure idea among advocates of federalism. What exactly does it mean? Can Filipinos use it as a guide in the design of decentralization and federalism?

Subsidiarity is a way of organizing social life on the basis of the principle that decisions affecting the community "should be taken as closely as possible to the citizen." It is premised on the idea that our freedoms do not come from the sovereignty of the higher levels but from the autonomy of the lower levels. Our rights are not gifts given to us by those who govern us. They are products of the symbiotic relations we build with other human beings in whose neighborhood we find ourselves. The local community, along with the families that constitute it, is the first source of society. The State must play only a subsidiary role—confining itself to those necessary tasks that the lower levels cannot themselves undertake.

The origin of the word offers a sharp understanding of the concept. It comes from the Latin word "subsidium"—referring to reserve troops that are mobilized to reinforce the regular forces when necessary. The reinforcement does not replace the regular army, but, as similarly, the State must not replace the community by robbing it of its powers. Its role must be to strengthen the capability of the local community to solve its problems, to experience itself, and to gain the pride on equal terms at the higher levels of authority.

The principle of subsidiarity operates with a model of society that is founded on strong families and local effort. The individual belongs, and is answerable, to a family in the first instance. The head of the family, in turn, is answerable to the community. The local community, through its leaders, is answerable to the higher levels in which it participates—the region, the province, the nation. And one sees why the higher levels are accountable to each link in the chain. In this set-up, the leader is positioned thus: "Superior to every member, he is inferior to the whole that he presides over, whose opinions are his obligations."

One of the most attractive things about principles held for federalism. The ideal society would be a federation of free communities that do not surrender their intrinsic vitality as organs of social life when they participate in the higher levels of society. They guard their autonomy only by federating with other communities, enhance their power to tackle complex problems that, by themselves, they would not be able to effectively handle. At all times they retain their power to check the decision-making at various levels.

The practical use of subsidiarity is a powerful lens for examining Philippine society. It allows us to view the events in which ordinary Filipino citizens and their local communities have been excluded from the exercise of the sovereign power that is supposed to emanate from them. It explains the paralysis of an active citizenry that is fully engaged in the life of their communities; we are shown the dissolution of families broken up by migration, of communities that have collapsed due to lack of local pride and initiative, and of disconnected individuals who are left on their own in a sense of alienation. Against the promise of a strong nation held together by coalitions bonds chosen by a free people, we only see a demoralized mass of individuals ruled by a privileged few, all waiting to leave their dying neighborhoods at the first opportunity.

These are problems that are not solved by a mere change in administrations. Their roots are deeper than poverty, corruption, or incompetent government. They strike at the very heart of what it means to establish the conditions of social life arising free human beings under modern conditions. This is the task of politics, says the 17th-century writer Johannes Althusius—a task he considers of extraordinary difficulty. He defined politics as: "The act of establishing, cultivating, and conserving among men the necessary material and harmonious conditions of social life."

From this it is not difficult to see where our problem lies. Our political leaders have divided our people from participating meaningfully in social life by instilling in them all the customary predispositions—despair, fear, inferiority, envy, pessimism and dependence. They have kept our people in a perpetual state of subjugation, reproducing the same conditions that allowed the colonial powers to enslave our ancestors. These are almost integral to our culture today, but their origins are structural. Our successive constitutions state that sovereignty resides in the people, but the conditions that make this possible have not been developed. They have kept us in a process of subjugation—because the sovereign Philippine state after independence, without shedding its character as a tool of subjugation.

Subsidiarity challenges us to return to our local communities and help rebuild them as environments that are worth working. It prods us to help our people become economically productive in the same communities where they raise their families, and to create paths to personal growth that do not diminish but enrich family and community life at the same time.

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Comments to public.lives@gmail.com

The Monsod episode

COMMENTARY

Belinda A. Aquino

HONOLULU—I HAVE HEARD IT JOKED around that the "C" in Isabel C. Monsod's name stands for "controversial." That maybe is unfortunate—per your handed whenever you meet her.

And so it was that when Winnie arrived in Hawaii recently to deliver the 2009 Masaaky Distinguished Lecture in Philippine Studies, she was "invited" for an hour by the US Immigration Officer at the Honolulu International Airport. It had something to do with her passport: prints not "matching," whatever that means. But she can explain the details better when she writes her own version of this episode.

I was at the airport early to meet her. When she didn't come out in 30 minutes, which is normally what it takes to clear immigration and Customs under normal circumstances, I knew she was being questioned in the holding area. She had been denied a US visa once before. They probably needed to check their files.

I had invited Winnie to deliver the Masaaky lecture, which is part of a much-needed big-ger endowment to the UH Foundation from the family of Thomas Masaaky, a Hawaii-born woman of Chinese ancestry who traveled extensively in Asia. The endowment is intended to foster a broader understanding in Hawaii of significant contemporary issues in the Asia Pacific region. The series is named annually among the university's academic centers dealing with Asia Pacific and this year's lecture was hosted by the Center for Philippine Studies. Winnie opted to talk about poverty in the Philippines, with the telling subtext, "It's Not Just the Economics, Stupid!"

In her usual irreverent fashion, Winnie was simply provocative in explaining some of the statistical material on the Philippine economy that usually puts people to sleep. I had revised her original topic, which sounded like Economics 101, and suggested a more upbeat theme combined with her usual deft sense of humor. She related to the Philippines as a country of crazy drama, often caught in a "perverse and often bad

You can be detained by airport authorities if they have reason to suspect that you don't look right. In their three procedures are fairly routine. But to passengers they can be a source of great aggravation, if not anxiety. Things could turn nasty in your mind at least. You begin to think you're being "targeted." One thing I have learned through all the traveling hassle is not to lose my Bahasa temper no matter how aggravating the situation.

The latest case in Hawaii against Immigration was filed by an attorney on behalf of a mother from Samoa. I think it was, who was carrying her sick child to be treated in Honolulu. It was reported by the media that they were detained for a number of hours at the holding area where the child eventually got sicker. The child, who was obviously ill, died a few days later.

Some former officials from the Philippines, especially during the past Marcos period, were unduly held for hours for interrogation, during some of them were warned for questioning involving cases filed in Hawaii courts against the Marcoses and the Marcos estate.

Many observers have remarked that the expansion of Hawaii Immigration is having the country's most vital industry, tourism, especially during this time of recession. Fewer visitors are coming even from Japan, the biggest source of Hawaii's tourists, who are already exempt from visa restrictions. I think South Korea is also negotiating a visa exempt status from the United States, but visitors from the Philippines and other countries in Asia Pacific should expect less than hospitable treatment all in the name of security.

In any case, Marsing Winnie, welcome to the island! (Should be better next time.

Dr. Belinda A. Aquino is professor and director of Philippine Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Meet the original 'padyak' politician–Apong Tarzan

By Russell Arador
Inquirer Central Luzon

LA PAZ, TARLAC—MOVE OVER, SEN. Mar Roxas, the original *padyak* (tricycle-riding) politician is here.

Reynaldo Sebastian, of Barangay San Isidro here has been running for municipal councilor for the last 12 years, from 1995 to 2007.

Each time, he never failed to make the records of the town's 21 barangays to campaign.

And to go to those places he had no other means of transportation but his rusty old "tri-bike" (bicycle attached with a sidecar), which he pedaled with enthusiasm and stamina.

Unfortunately, the 78-year-old perennial candidate, fondly called "Apong Tarzan" by his family and friends, has never won in elections.

That is one reason, he said, his three grown up children and his seven brothers and sisters in the United States refused to fund his candidacy.

"You still only lose," they told him.

"But I have a fighting spirit. I need to beat, you know," Sebastian said.

His 63-year-old wife, Gloria, said Apong Tarzan would often setting an food and other expenses to save money for his electoral campaigns.

Sebastian used to work as a concrete finisher and a carpenter but is now "retired," Gloria said. Three of their four children, now based in Hong Kong, Cebu City and Metro Manila, send them money for their daily sustenance.

Once in a while (but also receive assistance) help from Sebastian's siblings in the US. In fact, Gloria said, her husband received $4,800 from them in January.

But the eminent Sebastian quickly put to good use by buying a brand new tri-bike in preparation for the 2010 elections. He bought the bike in Tarlac City, rode on it and pedaled 20 kilometers to get home.

Sebastian said his platform of government includes a promise to double his salary as councilor for the medical and other needs of his constituents.

FERVENT: Sebastian: I am the only

THE RUINS of a once grand mansion built by a Negrense sugar baron have been turned into a tourist destination in Silay city, Negros Occidental.

GMA Negros visit sparks interest in The Ruins

By Carlo P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

THE TRIP TO NEGROS THIS WEEK OF PRESident Macapagal-Arroyo has sparked public interest in The Ruins, a grand mansion in Talisay City that was built by a Negrense sugar baron and another of the President's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo.

The Ruins is what is left of the original two-story mansion after Filipino guerrillas torched it during World War II to prevent the Japanese occupiers from making use of it.

The President, who has been promoting the Negros as a tourism hub, had lunch at the Ruins last Thursday before flying to Manado, Indonesia, to attend the summit of the Good Governance initiative.

Mr Arroyo said The Ruins was "beautiful, but how it is even more beautiful at night."

The 903-square meter structure, a bare skeletal frame, stands tall in the middle of its sugar plantation setting, continuing to awe both local and foreign tourists.

The gardens offer a picture-perfect backdrop and has been the site of weddings, photo shoots, concerts and parties.

The Ruins, which the Lacson heirs are turning into a tourist attraction and park, was built in the early 1890s by sugar planter Mariano Ledesma Lacson (1865-1941), a great-granduncle of Mike Arroyo.

Lacson was a younger brother of Mike Arroyo's great grandfather, the revolutionary general Don Aniceto Lacson, who led the forces in Negros during the 1896 revolution.

Lacson's first wife was Maria Braga, a Portuguese born Macao, the daughter of a ship captain.

According to Reynaud Javellana, a great grandson of Lacson, this ship captain may have brought many of the mansion's fine furnishings during his travels to Europe and Asia.

When Lacson built his mansion in the middle of his vast sugar plantation, it was said to be the largest residential structure ever built at the time. It had the best furniture, china and decorative items, Javellana said.

During the early part of the war, Filipino guerrillas from the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) set fire to the mansion to prevent the Japanese forces from utilizing it as their headquarters.

It took several days for the raging inferno to bring down the roof and the two-inch wooden floors of the mansion that was never rebuilt, Javellana said.

A brochure describes the architecture of the ruined mansion as Italianate, a 19th-century classical style which borrowed from 16th-century Italian architecture. It was said to have closely resembled the facade of the Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Javellana said one of Lacson's sons, Felipe, supervised the construction of the mansion, "making sure that the Ligurian mixture of concrete and its pouring was precisely followed".

This is probably the reason why the concrete structure of the building remains intact and continues to draw tourists and cultural visitors.

...s UN's World Food Programme Ambassador ...the conflict between soldiers and Muslim rebels ...rday

Unicef to RP: Lower maternal deaths

THE UN CHILDREN'S AGENCY FRIDAY URGED the Philippines to do more to reduce the high rate of maternal mortality in the Southeast Asian nation.

Unicef country representative Susanne Ithle, on a visit to a Manila hospital where she saw babies being delivered, said the agency was puzzled why one woman dies every two hours due to complications from pregnancy and childbirth.

"We need to understand why despite the available health care services, many of our pregnant women choose to deliver without the proper care of skilled health workers," Ithle said in a statement released to journalists accompanying her on the tour.

Data from a 2009 Unicef report shows a Filipina mother has a one in 140 chance of dying while delivering a child, compared with one in 8,000 in industrialized countries. AFP

Estrada relaunches JEEP ni Erap

By Roy M. Mabasa
Inquirer Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—FORMER PRESIDENT Joseph Estrada launched his new "JEEP to Erap" on Friday, the first of a series in the country in the 2010 election draw dowry.

A close friend, actor Rudy Fernandez, a resident of Daraga, Albay was among those who joined the "JEEP ni Erap" motorcade during its launching at the Legazpi Sic port.

Estrada, who arrived on a private plane with former senator Orlie Macoda and Gina de Venecia, wife of former House Speaker Jose de Venecia, is viewed as one of the presidential candidates in the coming elections.

The former president, however, said he was only up in 10 percent-more if he would run for the highest position in the land.

The former president was welcomed by his supporters carrying placards that read: "Presidente Erap Mahal Ka Natin," and "Say Erap Pa Rin Kami."

"We will cry our best and exert all our effort to find ways so that Erap qualifies to run for president," former Agrarian Reform Secretary Bernardo "Bert" Morales told the reporters.

Morales said Estrada was the most qualified and also a consensus opposition leader "unlike those who pose to be opposition but are actually behind the present administration."

Estrada said he visited Bicol because his supporters which consist of the 'masa' have been longing to see him after his ouster fall term.

"JEEP ni Erap," which stands for citizen's movement for Justice, Economy, Environment and Peace is the mass-based support group of Estrada which helped him rise to the presidency in 1998.

"JEEP to not a political organization but we strongly support Erap because he upholds the advocacies of JEEP and based on our study, what the country will needs is economic reform due to the current crisis," said Morales.

Morales, who conceptualized "JEEP ni Erap" said they visited Bicol to relaunch and revitalize the group's continuing advocacy.

He said the use of an eight-cylinder Ford F-150 converted into a jeepney bus symbolizes their advocacy.

There are many other jeepney units of the same make and design still undergoing finishing touches at the factory which will be deployed to other areas of the country for relaunching, he added.

Scanned in 1997, JEEP continues with its "trip" across all provinces in the country. Morales, however, said Erap has yet to endorse local candidates.

Morales explained that the objective was to promote the agenda for social change, social development, and national renewal through peace and sustainable economic development.

From the airport, Erap made a courtesy call on Albay governor Joey Salceda before proceeding to the Legazpi City Public Market, Daraga Public Market, and the town of Guinobatan and Ligao City.

Salceda, President Macapagal-Arroyo's economic adviser, said that "Estrada's presence in Bicol is part of a national campaign and is very much political and [continue] but democracy has enough space for civility and friendship."

JOSEPH 'Erap' Estrada's supporters walk alongside "Jeep ni Erap" in Legazpi City

RP cashes in on shipping downturn

SUBIC BAY—DRIED WHITE PORTS AROUND the Philippines are fast resembling parking lots as shipping companies caught by the slump in global trade look for places to park their unused vessels.

At the former US naval base at Subic Bay, north of Manila, and in waters around the southern city of Davao, dozens of foreign ships are now "laid up" waiting for world markets to pick up.

The global trade collapse has hurt Asia's export powerhouses and left more than 1,000 vessels unemployed around the world, according to Norway-based shipping risk management foundation, Det Norske Veritas.

The Baltic Dry Index, which tracks the cost of shipping raw materials, fell from a record high of 11,793 points on May 3, 2008, to 663 on Dec. 5, 2008, its lowest level in two decades.

Shipping companies are scouring the world looking for deep water ports where they can park their vessels until markets pick up again but not every Asian nation is being approached.

In Malaysia, an affluent from Port Klang, the national load center, said there is no large merchant of laid up cargo ships due to the economic downturn.

But in the global waters off Subic more than 20 foreign cargo vessels are silently bobbing like toys in a giant bathtub.

"We haven't been aggressively inviting them," said Armand Arreza, executive director of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

It was the shipping companies that approached Subic officials and some ships have been in Subic since November, said Arreza, whose agency oversees the port.

Another 13 ships are anchored in the waters off Davao City with more applying to come in, said local ports authority supervisor Junito Albarracin.

Helmut Sohmen, chair of the shipping and offshore services group, BW Group, said in a recent lecture in Singapore that the world shipping industry was going through bleak times, with demand for ships plunging even as more new ships are completed.

He said possible solutions to such overcapacity included putting more ships in dry docks for maintenance and "laying up more vessels as is happening already."

Asians believes shipping companies chose Subic because the area is generally protected from typhoons and because its berthing fees are lower than other ports in Asia.

Subic also has ample ship repair facilities. As it faces the South China Sea, ships can easily be redeployed to Hong Kong or China once global trade picks up.

"In a moment's notice, they can pull anchor and leave," Arreza said. AFP

FOOD EMPZY Filipino actress/AC Campaigner, ab... against Hunger, talks a story to children affected by... in Dasa Dole Banuar town (Negotiations on Tra...

'Big Three' oil firms dared to open books

By Tina G. Santos

A TRANSPORT GROUP YESTERDAY CHALLENGED the country's three biggest oil companies to transparency by opening their books to scrutiny.

"Why don't you show the books if there is nothing to hide? Show it to us... we're only after the truth. But how can we motivate the truth if things are kept hidden from the Filipino people?" lawyer Ferdinand Topacio, counsel for Pasang Masda, during yesterday's hearing on the motion for reconsideration filed by Chevron, Petron and Pilipinas Shell at the Manila regional trial court.

The "Big Three" oil firms have asked Judge Silvino Pampilo of Manila RTC Branch 28, to reverse his previous ruling ordering them to open their books of account, saying the order was without any factual or legal basis.

In his April 27 order, Pampilo asked the Commission on Audit, Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs to open the books of oil firms Chevron, Petron and Shell and examine the cash receipts, cash disbursement books, the purchase orders on the petroleum products, delivery receipts, sales invoices and other related documents on the purchases of the petroleum products from January 1 to December 2000.

Pasang Masda has filed a motion for intervention in order to become a party in the case filed by the Social Justice Society, which accused the oil firms of using pricing schemes grossly disadvantageous to the public.

About 1,000 of its members gathered outside the courtroom to demonstrate their grievances against the oil companies.

The oil firms, however, refused Topacio's claims.

"It's absolutely untrue that we refuse to open our books. But we refuse to show our financial records," said lawyer Jesusa Regidor, counsel for Pilipinas Shell. "We will open our books to the agencies authorized by law if it substantiates that the Commission on Audit, BIR and the BOC are not authorized by law to do an audit."

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6/49 lotto pot nears P100M

By Julie M. Aurelio

FOR PCSO GENERAL Gaviota, a cop in Quezon City, the lure of a big first prize in Ez2/6/49 lotto (LOTO) is enough to make him smile. The big question is the hope of winning the jackpot expected to be P100 million.

"Everyone dreams of being rich and becoming a millionaire," he said, especially if the lotto prize is that high," he said yesterday morning upon learning of the big pot up for Saturday night.

Gaviota added: "If the prize pool that high, I also go to line to place my bet even if I usually bet just once a month, because I always dream of being big."

The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office yesterday said the jackpot for the Super Lotto was expected to climb up to P100 million in time for Sunday night's draws.

Dr. Larry Gadon, PCSO spokesperson, said no one was able to correctly guess the six-number combination on Thursday's which would have won a P60 million prize.

The lucky combination of 39-26-36-45-46-48 would have raised a P63,499,466.46 for the lucky winners the spokesperson said.

Sunday night's jackpot would be the second time that the Super Lotto jackpot breached the P100 million mark this year.

In March, two lucky bettors from Pasig City and Caloocan City shared the biggest lotto prize at P347 million, but Gadon said the winner from Pasig City has not yet claimed his P173.9 million share.

In April 2008, a construction worker from Navotas, Random Cilo, took home the second biggest prize so far at P249 million.

The PCSO noted that since they began holding draws for the 6/49 Super Lotto the last a number, the jackpot has been climbing at a faster rate.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Regional Field Unit No. 5
San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(Supply and delivery of 44 units of Multipurpose Grain Dryers (MGDs) Project)

The Department of Agriculture Regional Field Unit No. 5, San Agustin, Pili, Camarines Sur will use GAA/Locally-sourced funds to procure the goods and services for the "Supply and Delivery of 44 units of Multipurpose Grain Dryers (MGDs) Project" and is hereby interested to pre-qualified contractors to supply the projects and to bid for the supply and delivery of 44 units of MGDs, as per specifications contained in the bid documents.

The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) is Three Million Four Hundred Thousand Philippine Pesos (PHP3,400,000.00).

Bidding documents containing details of the project shall be made available and may be inspected and/or obtained from the Regional Executive Director's Office, Provincial Agriculture Office and City Agriculture Office upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00 per set payable at any Land Bank of the Philippines Cashier's Accreditation No. and PHP3,000.00 for set documents to the Cashier's Office. Pre-bid conference will be held at 2nd floor, RFU 5 Conference Room, Conference Room, Administrative Building, Bicol Agriculture.

Deadline for submission of bids is three envelopes will be on 2 June 2009 at 10:00 a.m. in the conference. Opening of bids will follow 9:1 p.m. in the presence of bidders' duly authorized representatives. Bids received in late or after the deadline will be automatically rejected at the opening of bids in accordance with the provisions for requirements.

Bidders must be accompanied by bid documents in any other acceptable form, in an amount not less than 2% of the ABC in the form of a Manager's Check, irrevocable letter of credit, 15% Bond Guarantee, 2.5% Contract Bond.

The BAC reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract when (a) there is either false statement or statements submitted by the bidder; (b) the bidder does not meet the minimum requirements; (c) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (d) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (e) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (f) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (g) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (h) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (i) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (j) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (k) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (l) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (m) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (n) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (o) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (p) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (q) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (r) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (s) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (t) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (u) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (v) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (w) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (x) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (y) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents; (z) the bidder submitted a bid that is not responsive to the requirements of the bid documents.

For more details see or call the BAC Secretariat, Legal Office, Cha Sta. 417-2200, Ext.2075, Mr. Noel Agustin, PIO, Camarines Sur or log on to our website (http://bicol-agri.ph) or (http://dacnet.ph).

Atty. JOSE C. CARIÑO, JR.
Regional Executive Director

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Camarines Sur
MUNICIPALITY OF PAMPLONA

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Name of Project	Location	Approved Budget for the Contract
Supply and Delivery of Rice Seeds	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Fertilizer	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Pesticides	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Farm Tools	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Irrigation Pumps	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Rice Mills	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Corn Seeds	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Vegetable Seeds	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Fruit Trees	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Livestock	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Poultry	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Fishing Gears	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Boats	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Engines	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Nets	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Ropes	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Tarpaulins	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Plastic Drums	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Water Pumps	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Generators	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Batteries	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Solar Panels	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Wind Turbines	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Hydro Turbines	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Biogas Digesters	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Composters	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Vermicomposters	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Mushroom Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Oyster Mushroom Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Shiitake Mushroom Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Button Mushroom Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Straw Mushroom Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Wood Ear Mushroom Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Lentinus Edodes Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Pleurotus Ostreatus Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Volvariella Volvacea Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Auricularia Auricula Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Tremella Fuciformis Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Ganoderma Lucidum Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Hericium Erinaceus Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Grifola Frondosa Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Coprinus Comatus Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Blazei Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Bisporus Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Subrufescens Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Arvensis Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Campestris Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Silvicola Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Xanthodermus Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Augustus Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Placomyces Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Perrarus Spawn	Pamplona, Camarines Sur	Php 1,000,000.00
Supply and Delivery of Agaricus Praeclaresquamos

Bishop says GMA quitting after 2010

By Norman Bordadora

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO WANTS to leave the political scene when her term expires in 2010, a Roman Catholic prelate said in the latest website of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

But one Bishop Juan De Dios Pueblos was quoted by cbcpnews.com as saying: "Yes, she expressed it openly that no more (in politics). She will live a private life."

He said Ms Arroyo made the promise to him last year.

The website described Pueblos as a prelate close to Ms Arroyo.

The archbishop said the country needed another person to continue the "good things" that Ms Arroyo had done for 10 years, according to the website.

"There are many people who want to make use of her so they want her to remain in power," Pueblos said.

Pushing for automation

"My advice for her is just to continue her quarter to continue to govern but to leave a good legacy," he added.

In Malacañang, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Ms Arroyo wasn't giving up on full automation and expected the Commission on Elections to exhaust all "legal means" to implement the project in 2010.

"President Arroyo remains hopeful that full automation of the coming 2010 national elections will still be realized," Ermita said in a statement.

Ermita said Malacañang regretted the Comelec Special Bids and Awards Committee to complete the bidding process in favor of full automation.

"We anticipate with much hope that the Comelec, through its Special Bids and Awards Committee, shall reach a decision that will be for the greater good of our people," he said.

But if full automation would not be implemented, Malacañang also expected the poll body to have another option, Ermita said.

"We trust that the Comelec will have developed at the proper time a safe and acceptable back up plan and alternative to full automation should the same be determined as difficult or risky to implement," he said. With a report from TJ Burgonio

Bidders waived TRO, says Comelec

By Kristine L. Alave

BIDDERS FOR THE ELECTION AUtomation contract have signed waivers pledging they will not ask for a temporary restraining order against the Commission on Elections, hence the threat of stopping the award would likely come from a third party, a poll official said yesterday.

"It cannot not come from [the bidders]," Special Bids and Awards Committee chair Ferdinand Rafanan told reporters. "They waived their right to it."

Rafanan was confident any attempt to stop the 2010 elections would fail.

"Whenever would file a case to try and stop the election will not win," he said, adding that more than 90 percent of Filipinos favored computerized elections.

Big puzzle

Poll chair Jose Melo has expressed fears of a no-election scenario if losing bidders or partisan groups sought a TRO from the Supreme Court against the project.

Ramon Cudiz, an electoral reform advocate, said the threat of a court injunction that could stop the elections was a "remote" possibility.

While anyone has a right to go to the court, the "question is will the Supreme Court entertain it?" Cudiz said.

"That's the big puzzle ... I hope the Supreme Court would see the political implications and reach a decision that would benefit democracy," Cudiz said.

Asked if the narrow membership of the high court was a source of concern—12 of the 15 justices are Arroyo appointees—Cudiz said it would not be a problem.

He recalled the Supreme Court was packed with justices appointed by the President when it rejected moves in 2006 to amend the Constitution through a people's initiative.

Lagman's view

Another election expert, Augusto Lagman of the transparencydotcom.org, said the Comelec's bidding rules would be used by third party groups and even losing bidders to mount a campaign against poll automation.

But Lagman, speaking in an interview, said he would not lend the charge this time around. "We don't intend to file a complaint or petition. But that doesn't mean nobody will," he said.

2003 taxpayer suit

In 2003, the Information Technology Foundation of the Philippines, of which Lagman was an official, filed a taxpayer suit before the high court alleging that the bidding processes that led to the award of the P1.3-billion poll automation contract to MegaPacific eSolutions consortium was filled with irregularities.

In January 2004, the high tribunal voided that contract, forcing the Comelec to sub-prepositions for manual elections.

Scary scenario

Lagman said he "can't understand" why Melo raised the no-election scenario.

"What's scary is a failure of elections," he said. "Right now, there's a lot of confidence in the system, and the Comelec is creating its own problems."

'No-el' alarms 2010 bets, Comelec 'conditioning' mind of public

From page A1

Henrikson, chair of the Senate oversight committee on poll automation, said if the balking presences were there bound, "the [Melo] should be able to drop well."

Specter of revelation

"The failure of elections will be our people's worst nightmare if the Comelec does not get its act together immediately [the automation of the 2010 polls]," Henrikson warned. "Sino ewan Chairman Melo ... tumawa na about the specter of revolution."

Henrikson added: "What he [Melo] should be afraid of even more is the failure of elections if automation is cautiously done. That is a nightmare we may never wake up from."

He said Melo should have a plan B, "otherwise he and his colleagues will have to answer to the people."

Worst-case scenario

Henrikson warned of civil unrest if the elections were cancelled.

The Liberal Party chief said Filipinos, exasperated at the administration, would take serious problems like poverty and corruption, were waiting for the 2010 elections to choose new leaders.

Secretary Gonzalez said talk of a no-election would only "fan the violent imagination of rebels."

He said there would "always" be elections because "we can always resort to the old [manual] system."

"In fact the worst case that can happen is to go to an election with machines and the people will not be able to vote. The way it should be ... It can result in a failure of elections," he said.

Transition government

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo said a no-el scenario could be part of Ms Arroyo's option to stay in power.

Ocampo said in a text message that such a scenario resulting from the failure of automation bidding, coupled with violent incidents, could create a pretext "to justify draconian steps by [Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo]."

"They are testing political upheaval if elections do not push through," said Muntinlupa Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon.

United Opposition (UNO) president Jejomar Binay called on Ms Arroyo to step down and urged the formation of a transition government, headed by Chief Justice Reynato Puno, which will run the 2010 polls.

TRANSPARENCY IN ACTION Representatives from Hidden Orbit Inc. and Co.; Filipinas Systems Inc., Indra Sistemas, Smartmatic International and ABS-CBN Group Holdings Corp. inspect sealed boxes containing their bidding documents during the opening with the Special Bids and Awards Committee in Palacio del Gobernador, Intramuros, Manila. (JAY ALCID)

"As long as Ms Arroyo stays in power, we will never be sure that elections will push through in 2010 or that the elections will be clean and honest," Binay said.

"Ms Arroyo is going to hijack the only chance we have to set things right and end her regime of corruption and misgovernance," the Makati mayor claimed.

Speaker Prospero Nograles said Melo's fear of a no-el scenario was "absurd, ridiculous and out of this world."

Trust in Melo

Nograles was confident that the Comelec would find a way to avoid such a situation.

"I trust the Chair completely in this regard," Nograles said. "If all these preparations still result in a failure to elect national and local officials, it will not only be a nightmare, it will be total chaos in the land."

Quezon Rep. Danilo Suazo said Melo was "irresponsible" for making his remarks.

"The elections will push through. In worst, the Comelec will implement a hybrid system that will combine manual counting at the precinct and automated shall to computerized canvassing of results in the provincial and national levels," Suazo said.

CBCP reaction

Churchmen also reacted to Melo's remarks.

Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, said in an interview on Radio Veritas that the Comelec should ensure the holding of elections.

"The Church and the people would not allow no-el in 2010. This is a violation of the Constitution and of the right of the people to choose their leaders," Lagdameo said.

In Cagayan de Oro, retired archbishop Antonio Ledesma said Melo's grim scenario was possible.

"I feel it just seeing the water when he publicly declared the scenario. He wants to use the interest of the people," said Ledesma. "The key here is for people to be vigilant." With reports from Norman Bordadora and Allison M. Lopez in Manila, and Rita Cecilia Rodrigues, Inquirer Mindanao

5 more kids from Pasay surface vs Australian WHO official

From page A1

was parked at the basement level of his posh Makati City condominium.

Aided by parents

A 31-year-old Filipino pimp, who police believe was the doctor's "former victim," was also taken into custody during a nighttime operation on May 8 carried out by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

Gil said the alleged abuses were reported by the boys, assisted by their parents and social workers and with the help of DSWA 7's current affairs program "Sabado Nights."

The PCIDG is in the process of getting statements from the children while preparing separate cases of child abuse, rape and trafficking against the Australian and the alleged pimp. The two had been indicted for similar offenses of abusing the first boy.

The suspects' and alleged victims' names have been withheld in compliance with the confidentiality clause of the 2003 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, which grants privacy to both victims and suspects in trafficking cases.

Several rides

Gil said separate charges would be filed against the two suspects in connection with the five other boys, who were allegedly molested in different dates. Some were believed to have been taken several times for rides in the Australian's car.

The first complainant has told police the alleged pimp picked up boys his age in Pasay City regularly and then brought them to the Australian's condominium. The operation was known among the boys as they came from the same neighborhood.

The alleged abuse usually lasted around 10 to 15 minutes inside the Australian's car. The doctor purportedly paid the pimp P400 each night while each boy got P300.

The Inquirer learned yesterday that the Australian had been ensconced in his downtown flat under a non-visa stay at the Philippine National Police General Hospital.

Same call

A check at the CIDG showed the Australian was brought back to his cell Thursday afternoon after a hospital run. He fell ill on Wednesday.

The Australian, known to be a diabetic, was rushed to the Camp Crame hospital around 9:45 a.m. Wednesday after complaining of dizziness and chills.

He also had his eye checked by the base ophthalmologist after he complained of blurry vision, police said.

The Australian shares his cell with the alleged pimp and another detainee.

'Cute economist' tops RP Presidents on economic legacy

From page A1

remembered for his contributions to the economy, may well be right, gauging by the relatively small number of businesses he put down [under], according to economist Ramon Quesada, former director of the Undersecretary of Economics.

Economy moves

Arroyo said it was during Ms Aquino's watch that the Philippine economy "definitely moved up" after the crisis of the mid-to-late years.

According to Arroyo, Ms Aquino should be credited for the Philippines' improved income and spending balance and current account surplus.

This was a turnaround for the country after it was "brought to great heights and then great depths" by the "lawyer," the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, in the 1970s, Arroyo said.

The "housewife," President Corazon Aquino, tried to restore the economy but did not succeed, Arroyo said.

'Lost to us'

The "general," former President Fidel Ramos, a hero of the first Edsa People Power Revolution, pursued industrialization but the 1990s—when he and Aquino took power— should "already be considered lost to us" because those decades saw a dramatic financial decline for the country, said Arroyo.

The "actor," ousted President Joseph Estrada, after nine months of rule plundered, was election a year after the 1997 Asian financial crisis which brought havoc to world trade, he said.

Arroyo said the reforms, attributable to the Arroyo administration, "are probably the roots of the economy's strong points."

He said the "blows from the global recession" did not knock out the country because of the reforms introduced in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis.

Tight watch on spending

Arroyo noted the fact that the country's prior environment has stabilized since after the time of Marcos.

The inflation rate shot up to an average 14.1 percent during the mental late years, pulling up interest rates to 14.4 percent, according to a computer-live chart drawn up by Arroyo.

The inflation rate tapered down to 8.8 percent during Aquino's term, gradually declined to 6.2 percent under Ramos and 5.4 percent under Estrada, until it reached 5.5 percent today, topping the economy with a moderate 7.7 percent increase two, said Arroyo.

Consequently, the buying power of the average Filipino grew from 3.2 percent during the Marcos regime, to 4.1 percent under Aquino, tumbled to 2.0 percent under Ramos, retained to 4.1 percent under Estrada, and finally to 5.4 percent under Arroyo, he said.

Doomsday

The figures from the Marcos-to-Estrada years were the lessons that compelled Ms Arroyo to apply a tight watch on spending that allowed the country to earn three months' worth of cash reserves this year, Arroyo said.

As for what is in store for the economy, Arroyo said he foresees an "onslaught of doomsday pronouncements" because it's natural instinct in the United States is not about to end.

"Politicians who are positioning themselves for 2010 will insist that we are on the brink of a big economic disaster," he said.

According to Arroyo, many economists subscribe to the conventional wisdom which states that when the U.S. a major trade partner, "bounces, we each get smooch."

But he said an internal revision of businesses in the country would reveal that the problem is an erosion of competitiveness, weak employment generation and the private sector's unwillingness "to bet on ourselves."

"We should not blame the world," he said.

Remittances to shoot up

Quesada said taxpayers by more than fact that the members' remittances from overseas Filipino workers and Filipino migrants are expected to shoot up to P771 billion this year because of the improved peso-dollar exchange rate.

Antonio noted that the Philippines never caught the "recession thrid" because the country's troubles are shaped by "perceptions and fears."

He said "asset markets remain jumpy due to bad investment [and] the effects of investments on spending and investment accordion remain to be determined."

"Keep your cool," he said. "Don't lose your focus on business possibilities."

Nigerian rebels hold 15 Pinoy sailors hostage

LAGOS—NIGERIAN MILITANTS hijacked an oil industry ship and were holding 15 Filipino sailors hostage Thursday in the gunmen's demonstrations that all oil workers leave the southern Niger Delta within days.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta said in a statement the region's fighters hijacked the ship late Wednesday, then disarmed five gunboats in an attack on two military bases Thursday morning, a day after clashing with security forces.

Military spokesperson Col. Rabe Abubakar said two of ships had been attacked, confirming that 15 Filipino crew members were being detained in a militant camp.

Nigeria is Africa's biggest crude producer. After years of militant activity and lack of maintenance on crucial oil infrastructure, Nigeria produces about 1.6 million barrels of crude per day, or about one quarter less than its stated capacity.

The violence this week ended months of relative calm after the militants had declared a unilateral cease-fire to their three-year campaign for more oil wealth to be funneled to the impoverished southern region.

The conflict has been marked by gasoline, sabotage on oil wells and pipelines and the kidnapping of hundreds of foreign oil workers for ransom. Hostages are normally released unharmed after a ransom is paid. AP

Cory recovering well

EXCEPT FOR SOME BSCONhess, former President Cory Aquino is recovering well 16 days after undergoing colon surgery at the Makati Medical Center, her youngest daughter said yesterday.

"There's slight post-op discomfort but Mom has a positive disposition," actress and TV host Kris Aquino said in a text message to the reporters.

The young Aquino said her elder sisters, Ballsy, has been taking care of the former president who has been battling cancer of the colon since early last year.

Ms Aquino, 76, was operated on by a team of 10 doctors on May 4. She was discharged from the hospital four days later.

Her daughter said Ms Aquino was given "pain management" medicines following the surgery.

"My mom is a very obedient patient. She follows her doctors," Kris also said. —Ey Zamora

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INVITATION TO BID AND TO SUBMIT OFFER TO NEGOTIATE

DAVID COOK, 26 He's well-bonded with his family and missing them, especially since he lost his elder brother only a week ago.

DAVID ARCHULETA, 18 Being halfway around the world from family he misses hanging out with his brothers and sisters, even if "it sucks for."

American Idols on adoring Pinoys . . .

Front page A1

98 million text votes in last season's "Idol" and who already sold a million records, Pinoys wanted Hollywood Cook inside Shangri-La Plaza Mall.

The 26-year-old native of Houston, Texas, which preliminary in a back-to-back concert with "Idol" runner-up David Archuleta sought at the end of subsequent-six grounds in Pasay, organizers said Saturday.

"That doesn't happen at home at all. It's very unnerving and also humbling," he said.

Tickets with seats—reported by the front rows priced as high as P5,2,000—were reportedly all sold out. The venue has a capacity of more than 10,000.

A press conference held Thursday night at the Edsa Shangri-La's Ma Ballroom attended an unusually large crowd. The strictly by-invitation affair turned into an open house as children of journalists and others today enough to be thumb-tipped past security officers.

A sumptuous dinner was served.

It seemed like an eternity before the program started, as dozens of photographers clicked away nonstop, with Cook and Archuleta finishing drumming media stuff—say to reinforce.

Radio DJ Mo Twister, acting as previous moderator, stressed that the concert was not part of a tour, and was actually a special full-length performance featuring two different artists.

Archuleta turns 18

Asked what made them agree to come to Manila as a team despite being busy with their own respective solo shows, the two finish replied with enthusiasm.

"I just want to play anywhere and everywhere people want us to," Cook said. "So when they asked us, it was no easy yes. To travel halfway around the world and share the stage with a friend of mine, that's enormous."

Archuleta noted that "Filipinos are very supportive of American idol. And if you look great in some love and do a show."

Asked if there was anything special about turning 18, which he did quite recently, Archuleta deadpanned: "You can go to jail for a lot more things now."

Upon hearing the remark, Cook laughed out loud.

Death in the family

Only a week ago, Cook was grieving the loss of his elder brother Adam, who died after years of suffering from brain seizures. If he and Cook rendered some duets in his tour—finding speculations that his thumbs gig with Archuleta would be called off.

"I'm very close to my family," Cook said, citing filial bond as one of the things that enlivened with his newfound fame.

Archuleta, born in Miami, Florida, said he felt the same way adding: "Travel is a lot of fun, but I miss hanging out with my brothers and sisters."

Who will win 'Idol' 8?

The latest schedule of performing separately but presented Cook and Archuleta from watching this year's "Idol" eliminations.

While they're not particularly rooting for anyone, Cook said: "It's still anybody's game."

Takeovers, Archuleta was non-partisan. "Both are great. They have different skills," he said, referring to Season 8 finalist contenders Adam Lambert and Kris Allen.

A quarter-hour the Inquirer had Cook and David finishing for six answer. If they were given a chance to write a song that could inspire people to change for the better, what kind of song would that be and why?

Cook measured and couldn't give a definite reply. After a few moments, he said that a number of drivers he did for the El military was "inspiring enough."

Archuleta, on the other hand, said that all songs have their own way of inspiring people.

'Life in the fast lane'

It also took a while before Cook could answer what song best describes him at the moment. But he seemed very sure when he blurted: "Life in the Fast Lane" by the Eagles.

For his part, Archuleta, a family of four, chose "Time—we're a lot for work. He was really a kid who could not hide the overwhelming emotions brought by fame or a young age.

And while Cook said he hoped all the attention would last forever, he believes that is not a place and that he's hungry to have a family by his side.

Whistle-blower quits military, in hiding

Front page A1

five other members of her family, including Guillas, a single mother of two, live in South Cotabato.

According to Damasen, she has received unidentified men searching her house in Ilocos.

The Inquirer later asked Guillas by text message if she would surrender. She did not immediately reply, but when she did, she said there were many things to consider about the summons issued for her arrest, and still had to consult her lawyer.

But Navy spokesperson Lt. Col. Edgard Arevalo said Guillas was not being hunted down for a crime.

"The main purpose of the supplemental order is to find her and determine where she is so she can be returned to her mother unit," Arevalo said at Camp Aguinaldo.

Whereabouts unknown

Guillas, 41, the highest civil military operations head of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) during Balikatan exercises, has received seeking officers of pedaling over P40 million of the P66-million fund intended for the joint military exercises in Mindanao in 2007.

The media have been able to reach her by phone but has refused to be interviewed.

Even her lawyer, Sinai Nicholas, said he did not know where she was, and that they had been communicating by phone.

Nicholas said Guillas would have to decide whether she's going to report to the military authorities or not.

"The next her lawyer who gives her legal advice is the end of her day, it's her decision," he said on the phone.

Guillas was ordered apprehended on May 11 for failing to appear for work on April 13, after a 30-day leave on March 6-April 21.

Navy spokesperson Arevalo said on Thursday that she was "considered a deserter."

Guillas is also being investigated by the Navy's Military Inspection Board for purported fund spending and misdistribution—charges that she has denied.

According to Nicholas, the issuance of an apprehension order is "a normal procedure" of the military.

But he added: "Navy resigned effective May 1. She's not AWOL (absent without official leave), or a deserter like how some media are saying.

"As far as we are concerned, her resignation is valid. Under the Constitution, no one can be forced to work."

He also said he had yet to see a copy of the arrest warrant, and that he would question its legality.

Prepared but concerned

On the phone with the Inquirer on Thursday, Guillas said she had prepared herself for the consequences of accusing a number of generals, including retired Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Ceda, a former Palace national chief, of helping themselves to a large portion of the 2007 Balikatan funds.

But she added that she was still concerned about the safety of her 13-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter.

"I have received text messages that I'm being tracked down. I've reported this to higher and I'm taking precautions," she said.

Guillas said she would continue what she had started and would not stop even if the charges against her were dropped.

"The interest of the entire organization or the country should not be sacrificed for just one person," she said.

'Comprehensive' probe

At Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner Jr. said that while the military was committed to the 2007 Balikatan funds were properly managed, it had begun to look into Guillas's claims.

"We are doing a comprehensive investigation on the allegations as ordered by President Macapagal-Arroyo and the Department of National Defense," Brawner, the military spokesperson, told reporters.

He said the scope of the inquiry would not be confined to Camp Aguinaldo and even documents "but will relate Westmincom and we will call those involved to file. Rumor AFP to shed light on what really happened during that time."

Brawner also said that in the separate investigation being conducted by Rear Adm. Emilio Marayag and Maj. Gen. Arthur Manotoc, the Armed Forces' inspector general and internal auditor, respectively, retired and active officers involved in the 2007 exercises would be "invited" for questioning.

He said these would include the Balikatan directors and its planners, as well as Ceda, but the latter "may or may not accept the invitation."

On Thursday, Brawner said military action on Guillas's allegation was temporarily limited to a review of pertinent papers, including a Commission on Audit report and several programs of expenditures, because she had yet to file a formal complaint.

The documents showed that the P66 million in question was fully accounted for, he said.

File complaint, name names

But upon Ms Arroyo's orders, AFP Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Victor Ibrado directed Marayag and Manotoc to discuss the inquiry into Guillas's allegation, Brawner said.

He said the meeting between the two investigating officers took place at Camp Aguinaldo the other day.

"The internal auditor will focus on how the funds were released, utilized and accounted for, while the inspector general will look into the relationship of the Westmincom and the Balikatan directorate," he said.

Brawner said the military inquiry was to aid of other investigations being made by the ombudsman and by other independent bodies such as the Senate.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, chair of the Senate defense committee, had called on Guillas to file a formal complaint and send him a copy so he could act on it.

Brawner said the military was asking Guillas "to come out as soon as possible, file her formal complaint and name names."

He said the Navy was assuring Guillas of her and her family's security since the decision to come back to "military control."

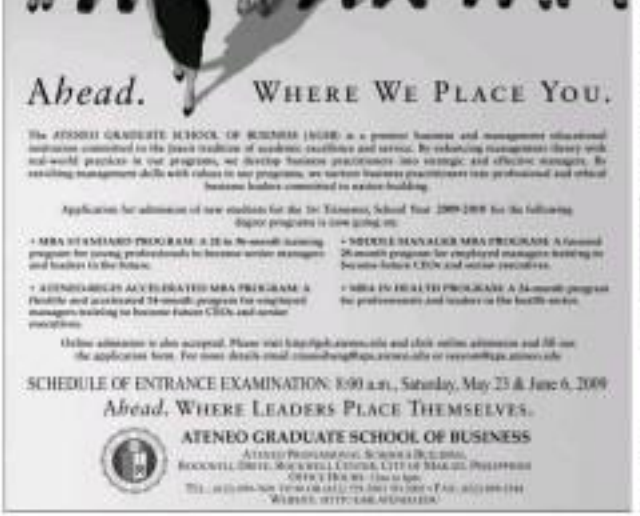
'Best defense'

Even Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez has called for an immediate inquiry into Guillas's accusation.

"All these things about fund misuse should be investigated because that is the only way by which we can prove we can clear itself," Gonzalez said yesterday at a news conference.

"I'm in favor of an immediate investigation. If there's nothing wrong there, that's the best defense on the part of the state," he said. "But if you just let it linger on or if [pursuing either is] already there, pati ang gobyerno dun (the government is dead)."

Gonzalez said the Department of Justice and the National Bureau of Investigation would be ready to look into the matter "if we are asked." With a report from Norman Bordadora



Gabriela persuading 'Vanessa' to file rape case vs US Marine

By Nikko Dizon and Michael Lim Ubac

THE MILITANT women's group Gabriela said yesterday it continued to try to persuade a college student who claimed to have been raped by a US serviceman last month to file a criminal complaint as senators eyed the repeal or abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) or, at the very least, its renegotiation.

Gabriela's secretary general, Rosalie de Jesus, said the group, which was approached by "Vanessa" for help, had been telling her that filing a case would help her "unload" the pain of her experience and obtain justice.

"She always says she wanted to unload the alleged rape[;] to prevent a similar incident happening to other women. So, since there are still US soldiers around," Dr. Jesus said.

De Jesus said that Gabriela also wanted "Vanessa" to realize that she should also think of herself and not just of other potential victims.

However, Sen. Ma Carinan- ay disclosed yesterday that under Republic Act No. 8353, a case of rape could be pursued even without the consent of the victim.

The crime of rape was formerly classified as a crime against chastity under the Revised Penal Code.

But this was amended by RA 8353, otherwise known as "An Act Expanding the Definition Of The Crime Of Rape Reclassifying The Same As a Crime Against Persons, Amending For The Purpose Act No. 3815, As Amended, Otherwise Known As The Revised Penal Code, And For Other Purposes."

As a result of the reclassification, the procedural requirement of consent of the offended party was no longer needed because rape was now a "public crime" unlike when it was still classified as a crime against chastity, Carinan- ay said.

Carinan- along with Sen. Loren Legarda commended "Vanessa" for her courage in speaking out.

Both said that under these the services legal and constitutional issues, Congress must look into the social consequences of the VFA, the treaty governing the conduct of American troops visiting the country.

"The Balikatan exercises covered by the VFA have been linked to numerous cases of abuses, including rape and prostitution of sex trade and the trafficking of women. What does this say about our commitment to uphold women's rights and their human rights?" asked Carinan- .

Carpio- , chair of the Senate social justice committee, thanked Vanessa for her courage in making public "a very personal and humiliating experience."

"My heart goes out to Vanessa and what she has been through. But I urge everyone to respect her privacy. Rape is so personal. No one can begin to understand the pain and anguish the victim will go through by recounting her ordeal," Carpio- said.

Legarda said this latest rape allegation against an American serviceman "brings to focus anew the pressing need to review the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement and to abrogate the same, if necessary, in order to protect our people from abuses."

She said there might be other similar cases that were unreported, noting that there was difficulty in pursuing cases under the VFA against erring American soldiers.

"It is the responsibility of both Americans and Philippine authorities overlooking the Balikatan to ensure that participants in the military exercise do not run afoul of the law. They should not take VFA-related complaints lightly," said Legarda.

De Jesus said that Gabriela would not accept Malacañang's offer to help the alleged rape victim.

She said Malacañang's offer was "beyond our comprehension and highly," dismissing that the Arroyo administration had connived with the US government to free US Marine Daniel Smith, who had been exonerated by the Court of Appeals of the rape charge levied by "Nicole."

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Probe Ebdane et al. for lamppost scam, Ombudsman urged anew

By Jhannex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE VISAYAS Ombudsman has recommended anew that its central office should investigate the possible involvement of Department of Public Works and Highways Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane and two other top DPWH officials in the controversial P500-million lamppost project.

The decorative lampposts installed in the cities of Cebu, Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu for the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit held in Cebu in January 2007, were found by Ombudsman investigators to be overpriced by at least 50 percent.

"On the alleged involvement of DPWH central office officials, namely: Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane, Assistant Secretary Rafael Yabut and Undersecretary Jaime Pestaño, we hereby reiterate our recommendation as per 24 January 2008 resolution that the ongoing investigation conducted by the Office of the Ombudsman central office be pursued," Assistant Deputy Ombudsman in the Visayas Virginia Palmares Jimenez said in her May 4 resolution that was approved by Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez.

Jimenez explained she made the recommendation because the Visayas Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over the officials of DPWH central office.

Jimenez said their recommendation was based on the claims of DPWH officials in Central Visayas that Ebdane approved the alternative contract or the negotiated contract to purchase the lampposts upon the recommendation of Pestaño and Yabut.

She said these officials have to be charged against Ebdane since he is a resident in the bidding process as required under Republic Act 9184.

The Office of the Ombudsman recalled last week how information on illegal anti-graft and corrupt charges before the Sandiganbayan involving seven DPWH regional officials led by regional director Robert Lalu and officials of suppliers Hitmik Construction and Equipment Co. and Gumpik Construction and Development Corp., as well as officials of Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu cities.

The DPWH regional officials were respondents in the four cases. In its May 4 resolution, the Visayas Ombudsman had cleared Lapu-Lapu City Mayor Antonio Radaza and former Mandaue City Mayor Thadeo Quano in one of the cases but they still faced two more cases related to the alleged anomalous project.

Santiago said Ocaña and Radaza were cleared in one case because they were not signatories to the contract referred to in the case.

But Ebdane was still indicted in the contract between DPWH and Gumpik involving P61.935 million worth of 120 single-arm and 60 double-arm streetlights in Lapu-Lapu City.

Ocaña was indicted in a contract between DPWH and Hitmik that provided for the supply and installation of 60 decorative lampposts at P10,800 each in Mandaue City.

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Jesus said to his disciples, "If the world hates you, remember that it hated me before you. This would not be so if you belonged in the world, because the world loves its own. But you are not of the world since I have chosen you from the world; because of this the world hates you.

"Remember what I told you: the servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you, too. I have they kept my teaching? Will they keep yours? They will do all to you for the sake of my name because they do not know the One who sent me."

Commentary:

Fulfilling persecution is part of the Christian life. If we have never experienced ridicule, criticism, or rejection, because of our faith with God, we have never had reason to exercise the gift-virtue of our will. Many television 'preachers' would love to tell us we have the happy and peaceful life. It's simply not true: we just have to live the life the world and mimic the world's standards. To go along with the world is tough to do since what it stocks God and today He wants us to rely, or to be informed of our life in Christ alone, thus not bring persecution. Rejection, even, on the other hand, always has a cost.

The Christian response to persecution should not be to run and hide. We should be glad. In the early days of the Church, the price paid for following Christ was often the ultimate price. It shows Christ often meant death by stoning or being strapped to animal skins and fed to the lions. Today, as he promised, for the sake of His kingdom we are called to the martyrdom of prophets. To be persecuted for our beliefs and for that we belong to the family of Christ!

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Cebu DPWH officials seek dismissal of cases

CEBU PUBLIC WORKS OFFICIals implicated in the 2006 lamppost overpricing scandal have asked the Sandiganbayan to dismiss one of three remaining cases against them, citing insufficient evidence.

The Office of the Ombudsman originally filed seven cases in connection with the allegedly massive overpricing of the P500-million project to install decorative lampposts in three cities of Metro Cebu for the 2006 Asean Leaders Summit. It later withdrew four cases for misconstruction.

Nine officials of the Cebu regional office of the Department of Public Works and Highways, two mayors and eight city engineers were charged with graft for their alleged involvement in the overpricing.

Two businessmen who operated the lamppost contract—Godofredo Bunoz, president and chair of the Hitmik Construction and Equipment Supply and Go with Sons, chair of the Gumpik Construction and Development—were also charged.

The Sandiganbayan 2nd Division dismissed the graft cases against Bunoz after the prosecution itself admitted in open court that its evidence against him was weak.

The nine DPWH officials—Gerard Warren, director Ruberto Lalu, assistant director Elmo Dimlit and Marlito Alviar, division chiefs Perma Fernandez, Augusto(sic) Hermoso, Lito Galang, Crescencio Baguio, Bienvenido Suja and Benilda Ututo—who earlier waived a preliminary conference were the ones dismissed, saying they "can no longer get a fair trial/deposition as everything has been pre-judged against them."

They said it was their "rights and prerogative to insist on the dismissal without prejudice considering that participating in a non-preliminary investigation adverse to main objective is to strengthen the prosecution's own evidence is like dipping oneself in boiling water."

The officials said the Office of the Ombudsman only considered the price of the lamppost which it alleged that the entire project was overpriced when substantial amounts were also spent for installation and other components.

"How can there be a contract that is highly disadvantageous when it is only the price of a single component that is considered?" they said in their motion. Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

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Vagni still unsighted

By Kristine L. Alave

THE INTERMEDIATE UP INTERNATIONAL Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) worker Eugenio Vagni remains unknown as the Italian aid worker enters his fifth month in captivity in the jungles of Sulu, the ICRC said.

Alain Aeschlimann, ICRC Asia-Pacific delegation chief, said they have no idea where Vagni is. He did not confirm nor deny reports on Vagni's location. Media reports said Vagni's captors were holding him in southern Sulu.

"There is a lot of speculation about it which is reflected in various media reports published every passing days. In the current circumstances, it is very difficult to know where he is," Aeschlimann said.

He noted that the last time Vagni made contact was on May 8. Since then, there was no word from the Italian. Aeschlimann said the long wait for Vagni's freedom has been agonizing for his family to bear.

"Their hopes have been raised on more than one occasion, only to be cruelly dashed," the ICRC official said.

Vagni was one of the three ICRC workers kidnapped by the Abu Sayyaf bandit group in Jolo, Sulu, on Jan. 15. The other two hostages, Filipino Mary-Jean Lacaba and Swiss Andreas Notter, were separately freed last April.

Since the kidnapping, the military has been in pursuit of the abductors. The ICRC said reports of sporadic clashes in the restive island could endanger Vagni's life.

"As we do not know where Eugenio is, it goes without saying that every time we have almost military confrontations we feel very concerned for his safety, for the well-being of the civilian population and for the safety of those who are working to bring about his peaceful release," Aeschlimann stated.

The ICRC official appealed to Vagni's captors to let him go, saying that the 51-year-old is in need of medical attention because of his ulcer.

NZ investor in Trillanes 'rescue plot' files complaint

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

ANGELES CITY—A BUSINESSMAN FROM New Zealand accused of allegedly plotting a rescue mission on Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV (Ret., Gen. Danilo Lim and other soldiers detained for coup charges on Thursday filed complaints against three officials of the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission and Bureau of Immigration.

Anthony Joseph Charles Newman initially filed a case for illegal arrest and said in still in violations of civil and political rights before the Commission on Human Rights Central Luzon office in the City of San Fernando.

Named respondents were PAOCC Directors Shamsun "Bong" Mladawon and Darth Delgica, immigration agent Eric Anthony Gan and several John Does.

Newman filed a case shortly before noon at the Angeles City prosecutor's office against the same officials for violations of Republic Act 9208 (An Act Defining Certain Rights of Persons Arrested, Detained or under Custodial Investigation), Republic Act 9372 (Human Security Act of 2007 or Anti-Terrorism Law), robbery, slight physical injuries and grave threats.

Newman's Filipina fiancée Jeanne Mendoza also filed a similar complaint at the CHR regional office and seeks for robbery and slight physical injuries at the prosecutor's office.

Villaluerne declined to comment on all the cases raised against him and his colleagues, saying the raid, arrests and the rescue plot would be a subject of ultimate investigation.

In separate affidavits, Newman and Mendoza claimed the violations happened on April 23 when the PAOCC raided the Eagle Firing Range in Clark Freeport and arrested them, including six former soldiers suspected of plotting a supposed rescue mission.

In his affidavit, Newman described him self as a "legitimate investor" in the Clark Eagle Sports and Adventure Inc. (Cesa), which runs the firing range. It is a facility being used by the PAC battalions to which he and businessman Jose Luis Yulo are incorporators, he said.

According to him, Villaluerne raided the range only on the basis of a mission order from the IG to verify his visa status in the Philippines.

In his affidavit, Newman said that Villaluerne manhandled him, pulled his gun on his head and dripped him of his underwear during the arrest. Mendoza's affidavit gave the same details.

The PAOCC director or other arresting officers did not present an arrest warrant, Newman said.

At the detention center of the IG in Bicutan in Taguig City, Newman said Villaluerne had him pulled inside a 4 x 4 meter cell with a cage front.

Pinoys homeless in Malaysia fire

KUALA LUMPUR—POLICE SAY MORE than 2,400 people—many of them Filipino immigrants—have been left homeless after a fire destroyed their squatter houses on an eastern Malaysian island.

Hasan Gunon, police chief of eastern Labuan island, says Thursday's blaze razed some 450 wooden houses. Most of them were squatter homes. He says there are no reported injuries.

He says some 120 firefighters took several hours to extinguish the fire, which may have been caused by a short circuit in one home. He says authorities are still assessing the cause and extent of damage.

He says the 2,168 people left homeless have been put up in a stadium on the island, a tourist destination off Sabah state. He says many of them are immigrants from southern Philippines. AP

WEATHER FORECAST

FRIDAY Widespread with rainstorm mostly cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

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Baguio	Partly cloudy	Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly cloudy	Clark	Partly cloudy
Cubao	Partly cloudy	Tacloban	Partly cloudy
Dagupan	Partly cloudy	Cebu	Partly cloudy
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No stopping Villar's expulsion

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE SIGNS ARE ALL THERE.

There is no stopping the Senate—led by "hardcore" rivals of Sen. Manuel Villar—from expelling him from the august chamber.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago yesterday called on all the presidential aspirants to voluntarily inhibit themselves from the case "to avoid public suspicion that the case is driven, not by ethics, but by politics."

One of the 17-member majority Santiago has criticized from announcing on the merits of the ethics complaint lodged by Sen. Jamby Madrigal against Villar for his alleged culpability in the C-5 extension project, a road link which, when completed, will run from Taguig, Pateros,pr up to the Quezon City circle.

Asked what was the gameplan of the majority, Santiago said: "The signs around—expulsion are manifest. The normal procedure for the ethics committee is to allow complaints against senators to languish. As a rule, senators are averse to judging their own colleagues."

By contrast, she said that in the Villar case, the Senate turned itself into a committee of the whole.

The Senate can suspend or dismiss any of its members by a two-thirds vote, so the majority needs only 16 senators.

The minority—senators Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Alan Peter and Pia Cayetano, Francis Pangilinan and Jinkee Jaworo (all lawyers)—has thrown its support behind Villar.

Two possibilities

Santiago painted two scenarios for the inquiry steps Villar of his membership in the Senate.

"If the majority votes to expel, the minority will go to the Supreme Court. There are two possibilities. One, the court will dismiss the petition on grounds of separated Supreme Court rulings that it will not scrutinize internal decisions of the legislative branch.

"The other possibility is that the court will customize the penalty, citing the constitutional provision that gives the Supreme Court power to adjudicate all cases involving grave abuse of discretion," she said.

When Villar is expelled, there is a real possibility that there will be a backlash of sympathy based on public perception that his presidential credentials have ganged up on him," she added.

Santiago said this would be a double-edged sword for Villar who is seeking the presidency in 2010.

Plot to destroy Villar

In a separate interview, Cayetano said he believes it was possible the other members of the majority in the Senate could decide against suspending or expelling Villar.

"What they want is to get the majority vote on a guilty verdict since their political machinery will go around, saying 'don't vote for Villar' because he's guilty," he said.

"It's just a plot to destroy Villar," Cayetano said, adding that the minority would no longer participate when the committee of the whole reconvenes on Monday.

In a separate interview by Inquirer.net, Senate president Juan Ponce Enrile would initially defend the members of the majority that they have the right to vote in a committee of the whole to investigate Villar.

"My god! What does Villar think of us who are vice presidentiables? That we're robots? That we're paid hacks of the presidential aspirants?" Enrile said.

Senator Villar, Senators Ibnalla Larson, Loren Legarda, Mar Roxas, Francis Escudero and Richard Gordon have indicated their desire to seek the presidency next year.

He should defend himself

Meanwhile, Larson, who was in Bacolod City yesterday, said it would be dangerous for Villar to continue refusing to defend himself in a Senate investigation.

"It is well and good if Villar wants to bring his case before the people," Larson said yesterday.

However, he noted that Villar's non-participation in the Senate investigation would imply that he would be "waiving his right to defend himself."

Larson explained that if Villar continued to do this, the Senate committee of the whole would only rely on the evidence presented by the complainant or the prosecution. With reports from Cynthia Balana, Inquirer Visayas

POLICE inspect a vehicle damaged by explosives Friday in Sharif Aguak town in Maguindanao. JOEVEN G. ANCOG

Ex-Gov Ampatuan survives 6th slay try

COTABATO CITY—ANDAL AMPATUAN, a former governor of Maguindanao province, survived a roadside bomb attack in Sharif Aguak town yesterday which killed one of his security escorts, local officials said.

Three bombs fashioned from mortar shells exploded seconds apart at about 9:30 a.m. yesterday in a stretch of highway in Sharif Aguak as Ampatuan's convoy made its way to his farm, said municipal councilor Ito Kiram, who was driving one of the vehicles.

Tony Ampatuan, 30, one of Ampatuan's security who was riding in a third car, was killed. Two others, Jacinto Antin, 25 and Jonjie Saught, 34, were wounded in the attack.

"The target was the governor but Allah shielded him. He was not harmed," said a spokesperson for Ampatuan, Maguindanao provincial administrator Norie Unas.

It was the sixth assassination attempt on Ampatuan, who resigned the governorship after the declaration of Shariff Aguak town, which was carved out of several towns of Maguindanao province.

Military spokesperson Lt. Col. Jonathan Rosero blamed the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front for the attack, but the MILF denied involvement.

Rosero identified the remote control bombs as explosive in the bombs, a technique that the MILF commonly used in the past. Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao with AP and AFP

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Saturday, May 16, 2009 ... Vol. 24 / No. 137 ... PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Messenger suspect in Makati computer shop murders METRO/ A19

Remittances hit all-time high in March BUSINESS/ B1

Lifelong student bids goodbye to great swim coach Bert Lozada LIFESTYLE/ C3

Signs of expulsion are there, says Miriam of Villar probe NEWS/ A2

HISTORY AMONG THE RUINS Before flying to Manado, Indonesia, President Arroyo inspected an 11th Ruins to draw attention to the awesome tourism potential of the 9th-century structures standing in the middle of a vast sugar plantation in Tolitoli City. Ms Arroyo also had her environmental mission for visiting Tiwi Ruins. It was built in the early 1800s by an ancestor of her husband, Mike Arroyo, the rope baron Mariano Ledesma Lacson. (Story on Page A3.)

'No-el' alarms 2010 bets

Comelec 'conditioning' mind of public

By Michael Lim Ubac and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PERHAPS, COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS CHAIR JOSE MELO should have kept his nightmares to himself.

Now, he sharing his fears of con-election scenario with the public, he has reaped the ire of three opposition presidential aspirants and several congressmen out to question Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

With their presidential ambitions on the line, Senators Loren Legarda, Mar Roxas and Panfilo Lacson yesterday rebuked Melo for his remarks.

Some lawmakers claimed the "no-el" scenario raised by Melo could be part of President Macapagal-Arroyo's bag of tricks to stay in power.

Melo told the media the other day he feared some lucky bidders in the plan to computerize the elections, or other groups, might go to the Supreme Court and challenge the award of the P11.3 billion automation contract. This could result in a last-minute temporary restraining order, leaving the poll body no time to hold manual elections.

"That would be chaos ... That is my nightmare," Melo said.

Legarda said in a statement, "Who gets to benefit from a no-elections scenario? Isn't it the administration? Now comes the Comelec doing a mind-conditioning of its own, seemingly or unwittingly, by saying that bidding bidders may use to stop our only poll automation for the election itself."

"Rumors and issues are emerging in the administration's storyline, not the plot remains the same: A desperate bid to cling on to power," Legarda said. "But the people will not accept any excuse not to hold elections next year."

LOCAL/ A6

Whistle-blower quits military, in hiding

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr. in Iloilo City and Jocelyn R. Uy in Manila

ILOILO CITY—THE NAVY OFfiser who blew the whistle on the purported irregular disbursement of SPUR Rehbilitation Funds in 2007 will not surrender to the military despite an order for his arrest, according to her elder sister.

Lt. Nancy Gudmo yesterday told her sister Nerlina Diamsuan that she was bracing to be arrested but would not turn herself in, "She sent a text message that she will be turning her cell phone off as part of her precautions," Diamsuan told the Inquirer by phone.

Diamsuan is based in Iloilo.

NATIONAL/ A4

THE WELCOMING THE TENANTS Ex-Quezon official Hermogenes gets the nod of outgoing King of the Ring as Cherie Gregorio's victory party. PHILSTAR/ A2

'Cute economist' tops RP Presidents on economy

By Nicanor Cabonegro
Inquirer Northern Luzon

WHICH OF THE PHILIPPINES' most recent Presidents succeeded in strengthening the economy and has the choice of leaving his or her economic legacy appreciated by future generations?

Will it be the "the lawyer, the housewife, the general, the actor or the ex-economist"?

President Macapagal-Arroyo, the ex-economist, is the winner, according to economists from the University of Asia and the Pacific (UAP) at a meeting hosted by the bank of Commerce in Baguio City last Thursday.

Each President's performance was assessed in the context of the historical environment in which they ruled, said UAP professor Emilio Neri Jr., who is also president of the Center for Research and Communication Foundation.

Ms Arroyo, who has often said that she would want to be

BUSINESS/ B1

Free Suu Kyi; US, allies slam Burma

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED States on Thursday (Friday in Manila) called for the immediate release of Nong Win Suu Kyi, as Western governments condemned new charges brought against the pro-democracy icon by the state's military junta.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said she was "deeply troubled" by the case laid against Aung San Suu Kyi just days before her ten-year-long detention was to have expired.

FRED/ A 17

6 leaders vow to save Coral Triangle

MANADO, INDONESIA—LEADers of six nations including the Philippines agreed on Friday to work jointly to save Southeast Asia's massive Coral Triangle, considered the world's richest underwater wilderness.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and the leaders of Timor Leste, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands signed the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security at the World Ocean Conference in Manado.

The CTI calls for stronger international cooperation to combat illegal fishing and environmental destruction in an area half the size of the United States and home to half the world's coral reefs.

LOCAL/ A-1

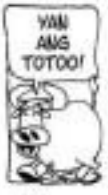
Pacman says no to Pac-mom, the movie

By Aquiles Zonio
Inquirer Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—ANGELITO Lacson, boxing champion and Pac-man, the movie.

Dionisia Pacquiao, mother of boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, said a movie producer has asked her son for permission to make a movie based on her life.

NATIONAL/ A-1



American Idols on adoring Pinoys: So humbling

By Pschale Concepcion
Entertainment

DAVID COOK, "AMERICAN IDOL" SEASON 7 champion, didn't realize how much fillipinos love him until he walked over to the mall across the Eden Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City where he was billeted.

Recognizing the rocker who has gotten more than

ENTERTAINMENT/ A-16

SHOCK AND AWE Idols David Cook (left) and David Archuleta as their press conference say they are shocked at how the Pinoys have taken to them big time. Their back-to-back concert tonight is sold out.

5 more kids surface vs WHO exec

By Tarra Quismundo

ONE OF ONE, THEY HAVE come out of the shadows.

Five other boys, aged 11 to 15, came forward this week and told police they had undergone the same experience that a 12-year-old boy allegedly went through inside the parked car of a 47-year-old Australian doctor detained for child molestation, police said yesterday.

Senior Supt. Theresa Ann Gil, chief of Camp Crame's Women and Children Protection Division (WCPD), said the boys met the children's center from the same Pasay City neighborhood where the first complainant lived.

"The still administrative and investigation [on the case became] generally, they told the same basic stories as the first [one]," Gil said, without giving details.

The Australian, a Manila-based official of the World Health Organization, was arrested last week while allegedly molesting the 12-year-old inside his silver Honda Civic.

LOCAL/ A6

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- Networks mark gains, losses in Q1 /B3
- GSIS drops plan to invest $400M /B6

Editor Raul G. Marvelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

BUSINESS

Remittances hit all-time high in March

NEW MERCEDES-BENZ E-CLASS Felix Ang (left), president of CATS Motors Inc., with Daimler South East Asia president and CEO Wolfgang Koppenhauser at the new Mercedes-Benz E-Class launch at NBC Tent, Bonifacio Global City. STORY, B3

1st quarter total up 2.7% at $4.06B

By Michelle V. Ramos

REMITTANCES SENT TO THE PHILIPPINES REACHED a record high in March, defying forecasts that the global crisis would shrink funds coming from overseas Filipino workers.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday reported that remittances, which largely influence household consumption—routed through the banking system reached $1.47 billion in March, the highest amount for any one-month period.

This was 2.1 percent higher than the $1.43 billion in remittances a year ago and 11 percent more than the previous month's $1.3 billion.

"Remittances from (sent home) so far showed up by the steady inflow (from) (of Filipino skills abroad and the wider access to expanded money transfer services by overseas Filipinos and their beneficiaries," the BSP said in a statement.

For the first quarter, remittances amounted to $4.06 billion, up 2.7 percent from $3.95 billion in the same period last year.

Three might be Filipinos affected by job cuts in advanced economies, but the BSP said this was offset by demand for Filipino labor from other markets.

Citing data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, the BSP said the number of deployed Filipinos continued to grow, a sign remittances were not likely to drop as projected by many economists.

There were about 556,000 jobs orders placed with the POEA in the first two months of the year. Of this, about 280,000 or 37 percent have been processed. The jobs were mostly in the production, services and professional skills category, the BSP said.

According to official projections by the NSE remittances for 2009 would equal almost last year's $16.4 billion.

But BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the projection was conservative, noting there was a probability remittances could record positive growth this year.

Tetangco said the BSP could not agree with forecasts by some economists from the private sector and multilateral agencies that remittances would sharply contract.

[redacted]

Farm sector growth slows in 1st quarter

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR MANAGED to grow 2 percent in the first quarter, although this was nearly half the pace a year ago when farm output expanded by 3.89 percent, the Department of Agriculture reported yesterday.

Citing a report from the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, it said the growth in the first three months was driven by the government's intervention measures such as irrigation maintenance projects for farmers and the distribution of fishing gear and fingerlings.

Palay production grew 5.15 percent to 3.506 million metric tons from 3.771 million MT in the first quarter of 2008. Palay output rose 1.96 percent in the same period last year.

In contrast, corn production fell 3.39 percent to 1.451 million MT from 1.69 MT due to heavy rains, a cold spell and the presence of pests during the January-March period in major corn producing areas.

Coconut output was up 1.14 percent, but falling prices pulled down gross receipts by 6.09 percent. Sugarcane production dropped by 18 percent.

Meanwhile, the livestock subsector expanded by 2.37 percent, a turnaround from the 3.46 percent contraction a year ago. [redacted]

ISABELA I ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC BIDDING

WHAT	:	Supply and Delivery of Electrical Materials
WHEN	:	01 June 2009 1:00 PM
WHERE	:	Multi-Purpose Hall, ISELCO I Main Office Compound, Victoria, Alicia, Isabela
Cost of Bid Documents	:	**P5,000.00**

For inquiries, please call:

MS. LUZVIMINDA D. TORRES - 078-6027824 or 0918-9428720

MS. LEAH V. GARCIA - 078-6027103

(Sgd.) **LUZVIMINDA D. TORRES**
Chairman
Bids & Awards Committee

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Bicol Rural Electric Cooperative
Naga City, Camarines Sur, Philippines
Tel. Nos. (054) 473-0000 / 473-0001 / 473-0002
Website: www.brec.com.ph

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

No. 09-005

The BICOL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following project:

Name of Project	CONTRACT FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF 414 TUBULAR STEEL POLES
Location	
Short Description	
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	PHP 4,500,000.00
Source of Funds	
Schedule for Submission of Bid	
Schedule for Opening of Bids	

Interested bidders may obtain further information at the BAC Office on the above address and inspect the Bidding Documents during office hours from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by the interested bidders from the address above and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00).

The Bicol Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc. reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to waive any defect therein, and to accept the most advantageous bid, all without prejudice to any liability on its part. It also reserves the right to annul the bidding process at any time prior to the award of contract without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) **ENGR. ANTONIO M. DE LA CRUZ**
BAC Chairman

PDI: May 13, 14, 2009

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Manila, Philippines

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Prequalification/ Description	One (1) year contract for the publishing and subscription services of the BSP Lal'ong Bagyo® Office, per BSP Special Terms and Conditions
Approved Budget for the Contract	P2,051,000.00
Contract Period	One (1) year renewable from date of award/Start of the contract

Prospective bidders should have undertaken a similar requirement awarded and completed from 1/2004 to present amounting to at least fifty percent (50%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract. The Eligibility Check/Prequalification as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Assessment and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	To be held on
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	Starting 15 May to 1 June 2009 (from 8:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.)
2. Pre-bid Conference	2 June 2009, 10:00 A.M.
3. Opening of Bids	01 June 2009, 2:00 P.M.
4. Bid Evaluation	Three days or in accordance with the prescribed periods stipulated in the Implementing Rules & Regulations (IRR) of R.A. No. 9184 (dated 10 January 2003, as amended)

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P1,250.00.

The BSP assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

The BSP reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, or declare the bidding a failure, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) **JUAN DE ZARATE, JR.**
Chairman

PDI: May 15, 2009

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www.jobsinthephilippines.com

ICTSI income slumps in Q1

By Rina T. Clidoro

INTERNATIONAL CONTAINER TERMINAL Services Inc. yesterday reported that its first-quarter net income fell 44 percent to P11 million from P19.91 million in the same period last year.

In a report to the Philippine Stock Exchange, the port developer said its consolidated gross revenue dropped 16 percent to P62.8 million from P110.04 million due to lower volume caused by a global trade slowdown.

ICTSI said its finances were adversely affected when it started reporting its financial figures in US dollars since Jan. 1, 2009.

It cited the depreciation of currencies in the countries where ICTSI ports are located relative to the US dollar in the first quarter.

First-quarter gross revenues from port operations were down 16 percent at P52.8 million from P110.04 million reported last year due mainly to lower revenue contribution from its key terminal operations in Manila, Brazil, Poland and Madagascar and the depreciation of the Philippine peso, Brazilian real and the euro against the dollar in the first three months.

Revenue contribution from container terminal operations in Asia decreased 13 percent to $43.74 million in the first quarter from $52.67 million in 2008. Revenue from its port operations in Asia accounted for 48 percent of consolidated gross revenue.

Contribution from container terminal operations in the Americas was relatively flat at $33.12 million from $33.26 million in 2008.

Contribution from container terminal operations in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, which accounted for 15 percent of the group's revenue for the quarter, suffered a 42 percent decline to $11.93 million from $24.11 million.

Eton swings to profit of P18M

By Dandy L. Laza

PUBLICLY LISTED ETON PROPERTIES Philippines Inc. yesterday reported a turnaround for the first quarter as the firm started to realize revenues from its ongoing project amid the backdrop of a weak real estate market.

According to the Lucio Tan-owned property developer, it made a net income of P18 million from its operations during the first three months, reversing a loss of P2.5 million reported during the same period last year.

The positive first-quarter results were driven mainly by revenues booked from the company's Eton Residences Plaza project, whose construction activities have already reached the 10th floor as of end-March 2009.

In recognizing sales revenues from its residential projects, Eton uses the "percentage-of-completion" method, which bases recognition of revenue on its project construction progress.

Yesterday, the company also reported consolidated revenues of P353 million for the quarter, representing an increase of 4,133 percent from its P8 million in revenues from the same period in 2008.

The revenues are from additional revenues on the back of the full-blast construction of its other residential projects, namely The Residences Greenbelt, Eton Baypark Manila, Eton Emerald Lofts, Eton Parkview Greenbelt, Eton Place, South Lake Village at Eton City, and The Masion at North Befion Constellation," the company said.

Rachel Eton, president and CEO Emile Jasmin-Sacriste said 2009 as a "banner year" for the company as it begins to recognize revenue from its residential projects and will keep leasing income from its office and commercial projects.

Remittances . . .

From page B1

this year because of layoffs being experienced in advanced economies.

He said countries like Canada, Qatar, Australia, Japan, Korea, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and those from the Middle East have announced new demand for labor to fill in job vacancies in construction, healthcare and other sectors.

"Philippine overseas labor offices have also reported new job opportunities in markets that have not been severely affected by the global financial crunch. These developments provide continued optimism for stability in remittances, notwithstanding the displacement of some OFWs as a result of the global economic crisis," the BSP said.

The BSP said remittances in the first quarter were sent mostly from the United States, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Japan, United Kingdom, Singapore, Italy, United Arab Emirates and Germany.

Farm sector . . .

From page B1

split, the reemergence of the Ebola fruition virus (EBV) and the price spike in livestock feeds.

The poultry subsector grew 4.08 percent, significantly from 4.03 percent last year.

The fisheries subsector expanded by 2.49 percent, a slowdown from the 5.81 percent growth last year despite a strong rebound in municipal fisheries.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

as of May 15, 2009

CURRENCIES

May 15, 2009 Country	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	1.00	1.00000	47.648
Japan	Yen	100.00	0.01048	0.499
United Kingdom	Pound	1.45.00	1.51900	72.35
Hong Kong	Dollar	10.00	0.12900	6.148
Switzerland	Franc	100.00	0.92900	44.27
Canada	Dollar	100.00	0.87900	41.88
Singapore	Dollar	1.00	0.69200	32.97
Australia	Dollar	100.00	0.73400	34.96
Bahrain	Dinar	1.8400	2.65100	126.30
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.9900	0.26600	12.67
Brunei	Dollar	1.0000	0.69200	32.966
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.0000	0.00008	0.004
Thailand	Baht	100.00	0.02900	1.38
UAE	Dirham	1.0000	0.27200	12.96
EU	Euro	1.0000	1.38500	65.9900
Kuwait	Dinar	1.0000	3.40100	162.00
China	Yuan	100.00	0.14600	6.955
Denmark	Krone	0.2400	0.18600	8.86
India	Rupee	100.00	0.02100	1.000
Malaysia	Ringgit	1.00	0.28000	13.344
New Zealand	Dollar	1.0000	0.58000	27.63
Sweden	Krona	0.1400	0.12600	6.00
Taiwan	Dollar	100.00	0.02900	1.400

Source: Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas as of May 14, 2009

Meralco alliance said to be holding up well

By Jerry E. Barros

THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE Lopez group and Taiwanese-owned Hong Kong-based Mermaid Electric Co. (Meralco) appears to be holding up well ahead of a stockholders' meeting of the country's biggest power distributor.

Miguel L. Lopez, Meralco vice president and corporate secretary, said yesterday that the alliance was on shaky ground and could fall apart anytime.

"There's no ... hostile that would prevent us from having a harmonious relationship with [the PLDT group]," Lopez said. "We have to work together because it's a joint venture."

Through the same alliance, the Lopez family is expected to retain control of Meralco after the stockholders' meeting and board elections on May 26, even though the family's shares have been diluted to a mere 13.4 percent.

The Lopez-led consortium agreed to sell 20 percent of the family holdings in the power utility to Pangilinan's group. PLDT's Beneficial Trust Fund had also bought another 10.2 percent of Meralco from the open market, bringing the Pangilinan camp's interest to nearly a third of the utility.

Also, San Miguel Corp. and its allies control 45 percent of Meralco. Even with the group's huge stake, San Miguel president Ramon Ang had repeatedly said that SMC would not move control of Meralco, declaring instead that the Lopezes would be in control for a "long, long time."

Lopez also told critics to quit baring intrigues on the three groups—the Lopez family, PLDT and San Miguel—as Meralco reveals we have a smooth sailing" meeting this year, something that could not be said of last year's proceedings.

"We don't want fireworks this time, as all the three groups need to work together," Lopez stressed. "This is a very good and resilient company—we cannot be sidelined by all these intrigues."

Networks mark gains, losses in Q1

Fortune smiles on GMA, frowns on ABS

By Dixie L. Lucas

THE COUNTRY'S TWO LARGEST broadcast firms yesterday reported sharply contrasting first quarter results amid the ongoing economic crisis that has dampened expenditures of advertisers.

On one hand, GMA Network Inc.—the second-largest television network—bucked the broad weakness in the economy by reporting a 33.4-percent second increase in its earnings for the first three months of 2009.

In contrast, ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.—the country's largest—reported a 21-percent second decline in its net income for the same period.

The disparate results between the three rivals are due partly to the 5.5-percent second increase in advertising expenditures enjoyed by GMA Network during the period, while that of ABS-CBN reportedly fell by 10.8 percent, along with the 2.3-percent decline in the broadcast industry.

In absolute peso terms, the smaller GMA Network also outstripped ABS-CBN, with the former earning P581 million, while the latter made only P191 million, during the January to March 2009 period.

Gross revenues for GMA Network during the first three months were up by 3 percent to P2.651 billion, while that of ABS-CBN reached P1.29 billion—including the P475-million consolidated contribution of Mapalo for same-on-year growth of 26 percent.

For its part, ABS-CBN noted that it was able to maintain advertising rates at acceptable levels, such that airtime revenues from the parent firm of P2.52 billion "slipped by only 5 percent from last year's level, even if advertising minutes of Jim Bagshaw Channel 2 [were] reported to have declined by as much as 20 percent."

ABS-CBN continued to assert its lead in the overall national television ratings, leveraging on the strength of its larger nationwide network, while GMA retained its lead in the so-called "Mega Manila" area where bulk of consumer-spending power is concentrated.

"In primetime, where most of airtime revenues are generated, ABS-CBN maintained its decisive lead over GMA with 38 percent ratings in April 2009 versus GMA's 22 percent," MBS-CBN said, citing national figures. "This translates into a 49-percent audience share for ABS-CBN during the primetime block, a 13-percentage point lead over GMA's 36 percent."

Smart acquires 40% stake in Internet firm

THE MOBILE PHONE ARM OF TELECOMmunications giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) has acquired a 40-percent stake in Internet service firm Primeworld Digital Systems Inc. (PDSI) and will acquire the rest of its outstanding shares before the year ends.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, PLDT said that its Smart Communications Inc. subsidiary acquired Primeworld to strengthen its position in the wireless broadband business.

"Subject to various regulatory and other approvals, Smart intends to increase its stake in Primeworld to 100 percent within the year," the company added.

Established in 1996 as one of the pioneering Internet service providers in the country, Primeworld has evolved into a telecommunications company specializing in IP communications services, such as permanent Internet connectivity, data center services, VPN, VoIP and managed security.

PDSI has established a reputation for good customer service with a nationwide client base of government and educational institutions, and resellers in large corporations.

The company also owns and operates its own wireless local loop network.

Primeworld operates under a legislative franchise, Republic Act No. 9092, granted in 2001, to provide services throughout the Philippines, and between the Philippines and other countries, including mobile cellular, wireless telecommunications systems and their value added services.

It also has a provisional authority to build and operate a data communications network owned by the National Telecommunications Commission.

(Martin L. Lucas)

Robinsons Land income rose 11% rise in first half

THE CONGLOMERATE ROBINSON'S REAL estate arm yesterday reported an 11-percent increase in earnings for the first half of its 2009 fiscal year due to strong revenues from its mall operations.

In a press statement, Robinsons Land Corp. said its income for the first six months of its current fiscal year hit P1.62 billion.

"The company continues to perform well despite the challenges the industry faces," said Robinsons Land president Frederick Go.

Its commercial centers division contributed 40 percent, or P1 billion, to the company's gross revenues, posting a 10-percent growth.

Go said significant growth contributions were the Metro Manila malls led by the Midtown wing of Robinsons Place Manila. Other positional malls also reported growth in rental revenues, while significant rental increases was also contributed by the newly-opened mall in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija.

The company has several new malls in the pipeline scheduled to open this year in Lanang, Cebu, Dumaguete, Tacloban and General Santos City.

Robinsons Land's high rise residential buildings division accounted for 34 percent of the company's revenues.

The business unit's six-month performance resulted in realized revenues dropping by 15 percent to P1.14 billion.

Revenues were realized from recently-launched projects such as Pearl of Galleria, Gateway Garden Heights, Mandaluyong Verande Mansions, Gia 606, Gateway Garden Ridge, Fifth Avenue Place and Bloomfields.

The company said it intends to launch five projects this year, including the Magnolia Residences and Summit Private Residences 2.

Meanwhile, its office buildings division contributed 18 percent, or P303.1 million, to Robinsons Land's revenues, which went up by 33 percent from last year's P229.3 million.

The company's hotels division showed a decline in revenue by 36 percent, from P387.3 million last year to P491 million this year. Boracay Mandarin Island Hotel, Cebu Midtown Hotel and Tagaytay Highlands International Golf Club Hotel all showed declines in revenues.

SCIENCE/HEALTH

E-mail: pi_science_health@inquirer.com.ph

Editor: Cesar G. Mangaoang

EXPERTS' ESTIMATE

Low-salt diet could save 13.8M lives

By Tess R. Salazar

I WAS HESITANT TO GET rid of salt, but researching about it made me rethink my dishes. There's a way of reducing salt without reducing the flavor," quipped Filipino chef Rolando Laudico, owner of Bistro Filipino at Bonifacio Global City as he prepared fresh tomatoes layered with fresh kesong puti and malunggay pesto on Mesclun salad drizzled with oil-free guava vinaigrette.

On May 12 at the Bonifacio Global City chef Laudico's audience was not his usual customers (tourists), but a group of doctors of various specialties, nutritionists, representatives of the Department of Health and a pharmaceutical company. The enemy was hypertension, but there was no new drug to be introduced, as Laudico passed the tasty salad around. His simple dish illustrated the point that putting in no salt didn't necessarily mean there would be no taste.

And while everyone was enjoying Laudico's salad, Dr. Yolanda E. Oliveros, director IV of the Center for Disease Prevention and Control of the Department of Health, went straight to the point as she opened a 2007 Lancet article that stated "reducing population levels of salt consumption by a modest 15 percent could avert 12.8 million deaths or an estimated total 8 natural cost of roughly $1 billion [as of 2005]."

With such numbers involved, even the highest official of the land would surely take notice. And such it was that Dr. Abelardo Aquino, Philippine Society of Hypertension president, said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had signed Proclamation No. 1761 declaring May of each year as National Hypertension Awareness Month recognizing the heavy disease burden of hypertension on Filipinos.

Global health problem

Hypertension is a global health problem, and countries all over the world are observing the 2009 World Hypertension Day tomorrow, May 17, to raise awareness on the link between dietary salt (sodium) intake and high blood pressure and its complications. Excessive salt intake has proven to raise blood pressure, which in turn is the No. 1 risk factor for cardiovascular disease, the world's No. 1 cause of death worldwide.

Reducing daily salt intake by even just half could save approximately 2.5 million lives a year worldwide, Asian strokes and heart attacks, according to health experts.

Sodium, a dietary inorganic monosalt, is an essential element for animal life. Taken in excess, however, sodium presents a host of health problems, the least of which is hypertension. The World Health Organization recommends a daily intake of not more than one teaspoon of salt (5 to 6 grams) per individual. However, new evidence recommends daily intake of only half a teaspoon of salt, and less for children. The present average daily salt intake worldwide is approximately 9 to 12 grams per person—far above the recommended levels.

Health experts have observed that salt reduction would be the least costly way to prevent cardiovascular disease. And while it's easy to spot ordinary table salt (and thus avoid it), most sodium in an individual's modern diet often comes disguised within processed, packaged foods and fast foods. Foods high in sodium include canned meats, smoked meat, bacon, sausages, cheese, chips (if sodium is added), canned chicken, soy sauce, powdered sauces, noodle sauces and salted nuts.

Ignoring sodium levels, however, can be easy. But make it a habit to check the food labels for its sodium content. It would also help monitor your blood pressure regularly at home.

"The evidence that links salt to blood pressure is so strong as that linking cigarette smoking to cancer, heart and kidney diseases," said Dr. Lyn Gomez, past president of the Philippine Society of Nephrology (PSN).

Salt cut welcome

To give more emphasis on maintaining an individual's normal blood pressure, a low-salt recipe competition open to all Filipinos 18 years and above has also been launched by the Philippine Society of Hypertension, Novartis Healthcare Philippines, Philippine Heart Association and the Philippine Society of Nephrology. Participants are encouraged to e-mail their recipe at bonaldo@novartis.com from May 17 to 27.

The recipe, preferably written in English, should include a brief explanation of how the dish was made tasty even with restricted salt use. For more details, log on to www.novartis.com.ph. Cash prizes of P50,000, P25,000, P15,000 and P5,000 will be given the first, second, third and fourth to 10th prizes, respectively.

The current aims to increase public awareness on how everyday Filipino dishes can be made delectable and healthy even with restricted use of salt," said Christine S. Lisunog, corporate affairs and market access director of Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

Dr. Francis Dominguez, chief scientific officer of Novartis Healthcare Philippines, said that "through the innovative Knapsack program, Filipino patients can improve access to Novartis blood pressure lowering medications which will help promote compliance and treatment success."

Major factor

High blood pressure affects over 1.5 billion adults worldwide. Globally, excessive salt intake is a major factor in raising blood pressure.

In a statement, Novartis has announced that it is focused on improving the lives of hundreds of millions with cardiovascular and metabolic diseases. It stated that as a global leader in hypertension, it has been a trusted healer for nearly 50 years. Novartis provides innovative therapies and support programs to treat high blood pressure and diabetes.

Its portfolio includes the world's most prescribed angiotensin receptor blocker, the first and only approved diuretic renin inhibitor, a single pill containing two leading high blood pressure medicines, and a novel DPP-4 inhibitor.

Still, with all that Novartis and other pharmaceutical companies have achieved in treating high blood pressure, the simplest advice could prove to be the best treatment option.

Go easy on the salt.

CHEF Rolando Laudico together with Philippine Society of Hypertension president Dr. Abelardo Aquino proudly displays the 2009 World Hypertension Day commemorative apron signifying their joint commitment to raise public awareness and to encourage all Filipinos to reduce their salt intake in an effort to stop the rising prevalence of hypertension and related health risks in the country.

Pharma giant slashes drug prices

By Charles E. Rukan

SMARAND PHARMACEUTICAL GIANT GlaxoSmithKline Philippines cut the price of its drugs by as much as 30 percent, becoming the first in the world to do so under a worldwide program that targets 50 least developed countries.

GSK is the largest multinational pharmaceutical and healthcare company in the Philippines.

Branded drug products included in the price slash are those for acute diseases such as pneumonia and other bacterial infections, ulcer, bronchitis, hospital-acquired infection, tetanus and vomiting.

The price reduction also included GSK's drugs used to manage chronic diseases such as hypertension, type-2 diabetes, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), bipolar disorder and chronic hepatitis B infection.

More affordable price

The company's newest cancer vaccine candidate is to be available at a more affordable price, after it was reduced by as much as 50 percent last November.

"The price reduction is one of GSK's biggest and boldest steps to make its branded and patented drug products affordable to more Filipinos. We believe that as a global pharmaceutical company, we have an obligation to help the poor get treatment," said Roberto Tabuada, GSK Philippines president and managing director.

Tabuada explained that the price reduction is not a limited promotion.

"Rather, it is our long-term commitment to Filipino patients. GSK Philippines' previous experience with our Global Fund-supported programs plus the continued support and feedback from patients and doctors made us confident that we will be able to sustain this program," he explained.

Started in 2004, the Global Health program significantly reduced the prices of select GSK original and most widely prescribed products that included the company's cervical cancer vaccine.

Do the same

With GSK Philippines setting itself as role model, Tabuada is hoping that more drug firms, whether locally based or multinational, will do a similar step to bring down the cost of medicine here in the Philippines.

"Pharmaceutical companies are always being criticized for their products' high prices. With this move, GSK is one of the few who stood up and addressed the issue," Tabuada said.

He also explained that the lowering of prices will not have an effect in GSK's operation in the Philippines.

"GSK Philippines is, in fact, increasing its clinical research programs here. This is because the country has become one of the centers of excellence in terms of clinical trials that will allow a number of Filipino patients to have access to new and innovative medicines being studied," Tabuada said.

National will for CVD reduction

MEDICAL FILES

Rafael Castillo, M.D.

DESPITE THE SWINE FLU SCARE, San Francisco in California was bustling with activity last week as several thousand hypertension specialists and other physicians converged with high blood pressure (BP) prevention and control as the annual convention of the American Society of Hypertension met.

I had the privilege of being invited to lecture on the growing threat of hypertension and cardiovascular disease (CVD) in our country and the rest of Asia. I must confess it was a humbling experience to find out how poorly we fare in executing a national policy on CVD prevention and control.

Dr. Venkata Ram, ASH vice-president, took the initiative of integrating this session into the scientific program of this year's ASH annual conference. It's just proper that specialists from more attention on the alarming CVD threat to this part of the globe because more than half of the world's population resides in Asia. It is also projected that 80 percent of cardiovascular deaths worldwide will soon occur in low- and middle-income countries—an already emerging most future countries belong.

Quite different

Although Filipinos and other Asians mimic disease trends in the West, the presentation of CVD in Asia is quite different from that seen in the West. In addition experts response to treatment might also differ, necessitating separate workups in Asian populations.

Many countries in Asia have a higher incidence of stroke than coronary heart disease (CHD). The opposite pattern is seen in the United States and Europe. This is likely due to the high prevalence of hypertension in many Asians for stroke than CHD.

Cholesterol problem or dyslipidemia is generally lower in most Asian nations compared to Western countries. The relatively lower cholesterol levels in our country is true even in regions consuming a lot of coconut products such as the Bicol region.

The only way we can really impact significantly to reducing the prevalence of hypertension and CVD in our country and the rest of Asia is through interventions delivered at the population at large. Efforts of individual physicians to competently treating their patients would not be sufficient. A very simple and doable population strategy for hypertension and CVD control is salt reduction at the population level. If we could only implement strategies at salt reduction wholeheartedly here, countless lives would be saved annually.

The Philippine Society of Hypertension, currently headed by Dr. Beng Aquino, is celebrating today the World Hypertension Day together with all hypertension societies in the world, and this year the public information campaign focuses on salt reduction. If we could only reduce our salt intake by half, this can significantly bring down the blood pressure, reduce stroke and to some extent reduce CHD.

For more than two decades now, other countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Finland, Australia and New Zealand have shown the effectiveness of community interventions to reduce salt consumption. Salt reduction by individuals and by manufacturers of widely consumed products like canned or processed foods and bread, can result to a drastic reduction in cardiovascular deaths and illness.

Personally I believe that more than the individual efforts to stay away from the salt shaker on the table, initiatives of food manufacturers to reduce by half the amount of salt they use in processing their food products can impact more heavily in reducing the entire population's salt intake and its associated cardiovascular complications.

Gentle persuasion

We hope to convince our food manufacturers by gentle persuasion but if they won't heed our call, they can be made to do it through legislation, which our congressmen and senators should initiate in their health agenda. After all, it can be said that our food manufacturers are committing mass homicide by surreptitiously in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos, from CVD due to increased salt intake.

Finland used to have one of the world's highest prevalence of hypertension, stroke and CHD. Since the late 1970s, the Finnish government has been implementing population-wide reduction of dietary salt and this has led to population-wide reductions in blood pressure and deaths from stroke and CHD.

A population-wide salt reduction is definitely the most cost-effective strategy that any low-income nation such as ours—which can only afford to allocate a health budget that is less than 2 percent of its GDP—can implement. It's very simple, but it's easier said than done. It requires a strong political will, something which is not a strong attribute of our nation.

BUSINESS

GSIS drops plan to invest $400M

Pension fund cites global slowdown

By Raoul W. Dominguez

THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE System has shelved indefinitely the $400-million second tranche of its $1.6-billion global investment program (GIP) due to the worldwide financial crunch, a GSIS official yesterday said.

Cecil L. Soto, senior vice president in charge of GSIS' asset management group, said in an interview that the amount would definitely not be invested this year.

Soto added that whether the amount would be deployed to foreign investments next year was also not certain as the president chose the global economic downturn was reported to linger.

"The $400 million was supposed to have been invested in 2009," she said.

"But the GSIS decided to shelve this given [whether] it could choose financial advisors."

The pension fund had planned to invest a total of $1 billion last year, $600 million of which it was able to allocate to resources managed by ING Investment Management and Credit Agricole Asset Management.

Mixed to better asset future claims and benefits of its members, the GSIS kicked off in April 2008.

Wilenita P. Garcia, GSIS president and general manager, said last month that the pension fund is ready to make another round the world presentation the pension fund with fresh buying opportunities, adding that the investments were long-term in nature.

Also, the GSIS said last October it had earned $1.4 billion in or end-September 2008 from an initial investment of P28.12 billion, for a return of 5.05 percent.

However, the Japanese subsequently reported that the agency may be set-to-be losing 8 percent in dollar terms or against a gain in peso terms.

When compared to dollar terms, the figures showed that the pension fund may have incurred losses of as high as $40.9 million, or about P2.33 billion, using the foreign exchange rate in October.

The GSIS said it had acquired 123 stocks under the GIP but the "global property securities" is held shelved indefinitely despite its fund's rebate to the media after the agency declared profits from its overseas investments.

In December 2007, the GSIS awarded Citibank a contract that assigns the latter as responsible for the safekeeping and administration of the fund's assets.

GSIS pools contributions from government workers and its mandate is to grow the fund to meet the future benefits of government workers once they retire or leave government service.

Also, GSIS awarded ING and Credit Agricole Asset Management mandates to manage the fund's foreign investments.

In announcing the contract award to Citibank, Garcia said: Citi would monitor subcustodian risk and would provide the GSIS with local market knowledge.

This, in turn, was supposed to result in timely communication of market changes, better control over operations and client service quality and fast inquiry or problem resolution.

The $1 billion allocated to the GIP represents about 12 percent of the overall GSIS loans and investment portfolio.

Subic port exports up 55% in Q1

By Abigail L. Ho

ENTERPRISES OPERATING WITHIN the Subic Bay Freeport registered a 54.79 percent increase in exports in the first quarter to $555.5 million, from $232.2 million in the same period a year ago.

According to data from the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, export production within the free port hit $173.6 million in March alone, accounting for almost half of first quarter exports.

BMA stated the year with $127.8 million worth of exports in January, further climbing to only $186 million the month after.

The bulk of first quarter exports, or a total of $328.3 million, came from Subic Bay's 83 export enterprises. BMA administrator Armand Arreza said yesterday in statement.

The top exporter in the January-March period was Korean shipbuilder Hanjin Heavy Industries Co. Philippines with total freight or board (FOB) export value of $179.4 million, followed by Hong Kong-based Pacific Textiles (Subic) Dis Mobile Philippines with $57.4 million and Taiwanese computer maker Pharaon Information (Philippines) Corp. with $30.13 million.

Also gaining big top export dollars for the first post-year three Japanese companies: Automated roller manufacturer Nidec Philippines with $16.5 million, microwave maker Sanyo Tools with $16.2 million and wood products manufacturer Jukon Enterprises with $8.7 million.

Danish eyewear maker Lindberg Subic Inc. also made the top 14 export list with $6.38 million, and the Swiss-Japan food processor Nestle Tong Lang (Philippines) Metal Industry with $4.3 million. Taiwanese air-conditioner maker Hitachi with $2.4 million and Japanese electronics sensor maker Yuasa with $2.8 million.

Sharing honors with ribbon-cutting ceremony during the grand opening of SM City Baguio are: (from L-R) Baguio Pangasinan Mayor Ricardo Rovila, Vice Governor Marlyn Primicias-Agbayo, Former Congressman Conrado Estrella III, behind him is Congressman Edelmiro Estrella, Congressman Conrado Estrella III, Rep. Mayr. Larry Hernandez, SM Founder and Chairman Henry Sy, Sr., PMS secretary General Hermogenes Esperon, SM Prime Holdings Inc. President Hans T. Sy and Baguio Pangasinan Vice Mayor Ronna Sto. Pangasinan shoppers have a second look at SM City Baguio as the mall's second phase opens its doors to the public today. Located on a 121,685 square meter property, the mall's Phase 2 includes the Event Center, Hypermarket, Ace Hardware, Appliance Center and Watsons while Phase 3 opens on the SM Megastore like SM Department Store, Footmart and SM Cinemas and the mall's grand Atrium.

Gov't sees more investments

DESPITE THE GLOBAL RECESSION, the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority are confident that investments will continue to flow into the economy.

According to data from the two investment promotion agencies, approved investments reached P177.96 billion in the first quarter. This amount had been committed for 332 BOI and PEZA projects.

BOI and PEZA aim to lock up committed investments by 3 percent this year, on an unlikelihood inflation of 0.6% to 6%.

Of this total, BOI and PEZA had secured P166 billion, or $3.423 billion, would come from foreign investors.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, however, had a significantly lower foreign direct investment projection for the year at only $740 million.

Trade Undersecretary and BOI managing head Elmer Bernardo explained that the central bank had a different way of looking at FDI.

He said the BSP based its FDI data on the balance of payments concept, which meant the FDI was measured in terms of actual capital inflows, covering cash and noncash items, minus within a given period.

Direct investments, on the other hand, such as the form of equity capital, reinvested earnings and intercompany debt.

In the case of BOI and Peza, Bernardo said that the two agencies had higher investment figures than the BSP as approved projects had long gestation periods and so were counted as the breaking systems.

This long time, therefore, skewed the data coming from the BOI and Peza, he said.

"The BSP does not have data for Board Investments, which Peza says will start operations this year. The big [investments] may not truly reflect today's buying," he added.

He explained that the BSP had yet to capture FDI from previously approved investments, including $75 $3-billion expansion investment, which was approved at the back in 2007. Abigail L. Ho

Are our children learning?

For every 100 Filipino children who enroll in grade 1, only 65 will complete grade 6. Only 43 reach and complete HS.

For those who complete grade 6, only 23% achieve reading with comprehension.

For those who complete 4th year high school, only 7% achieve the required mastery of English, 2% achieve the required mastery of Science and 16% achieve the required mastery of Math.

For those who complete college, only 2 - 7% who apply for jobs in the business process outsourcing sector are accepted – and not without having to undergo 3 more months of in-house training to become more productive.

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Fish tales from Mindanao

MINDANAWORLD

Joyl Kagan-Nuro

THE DAVAO CONSULAR OFFICE HERE in Davao City invited us to another school session, to the Indonesia-Philippines Education Workshop held last May 13-14, 2009. I was so glad that projects like this are held in the spirit of the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA).

As of today, the Jakarta and Medan Consulates-General opened 13 MEE1 country of the BIMP-EAGA plans to conduct a market research on agricultural and fishery-based products in response to current mandates from the leaders of BIMP-EAGA.

At the Mindanao representative for the Export Development Council, I witnessed this research and study that is being done. Filipinos are among the richest in the region's gross production of 2.15 million metric tons and with an average annual growth rate of 6.7 percent.

The conduct of the market studies was identified as one of the priority actions during the 9th BIMP-EAGA SMEE Cluster meeting held recently in Puerto Princesa.

The cluster has also considered facilitating business matching activities, trading activities and other business development services to support project preparation of EAGA agriculture / fishery-based food products.

The initiatives form part of the overall plans to make the BIMP-EAGA the food basket of Asean. The SMEE Clusters and the industry players are expected to formulate specific activities that will be geared more on the sourcing challenges or deliverables of a specific food product or project, while the value chain analysis will be used as a tool to effectively draw out potential projects.

The plan of having BIMP-EAGA as the food basket of Asean is very possible, Mindanao, specifically General Santos—Tuna Capital of the Philippines—is a very tangible proof of its realization. The abundant plants at the food of Mineral dyes in Davao are an example of the blessed natural resources found within the BIMP-EAGA region.

The study, however, might be costly due to the immense research the cluster is tasked to do. We are eyeing the assistance of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) or the Economic Research Institute for Asean and East Asia (Eria) for the study.

Meanwhile, the Federal Economic Development Council (FEDCo) said here recently that it would look into trade opportunities for inshore cages from Pohnpei.

FEDCo has also requested the assistance of the BIMP Clarke to assist in linking Pohnpei live fish traders with buyers from other parts of Malaysia and Taiwan. It should be noted that Weno isle's ede-tourist (the development of EAGA is also very important because it is one of the BIMP-EAGA focus areas, along with Mindanao.

On the other hand, the Davao-gyro Federation of Fishing and Allied Industries Inc., said at least 30 vessels from the region are in shares—fishing and cannery business—eyed to beat the brunt of Europe's tag ulation slated to take effect Jan. 1, 2010, which will also apply to other countries.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has started consulting tuna industry players regarding Europe's regulation aimed to curb illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing around the globe.

Under Europe's fisheries product policing rules fish producers are required to provide a catch certificate that details where the stocks were caught and the volume, or to either reach the traceability of the supplies.

The tuna businesses noted that it may become a major problem for the Philippine side. Canned tuna producers, under the same policy, should also not accept marks that have no catch certificates, otherwise the goods will not be accepted in Europe.

He of the country's seven tuna canneries are based in this city, dubbed the "Tuna Capital of the Philippines."

He also said that Europe's policy would also burden Filipino fishing vessel operators as they need to inflict more capital to upgrade their fleet to comply with the handling requirements imposed by the foreign market. Small players that would be able to afford to upgrade their vessels may be forced to shut down their businesses permanently. If, today, it is already beneficial for the big players, the concerns of the rates of small players in the fish catch industry, it may be too early to implement such policy.

This is a tough challenge for the tuna sector of Mindanao and requires swift decisions and actions.

Joyl Kagan-Nuro is an advocate for the identity of the region. She is chair of Joyl Kagan Associates, a consultancy in Davao, Philippines. Of course, Mindanao Pro Vs. Inbox Access: E-mail comments [jabbo2@yahoo.com]

PROPERTY

Editor Cesar D. Mangosing

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'Turtles are our stamp of approval'

By Tess R. Salazar

JOSE RAZON PUYAT III IS proud that, at certain times in the course of a year, there are more turtles patrolling his Bamboo Beach in Kawayan Cove than there are human beachgoers.

"They [were Olive Ridley Turtles] are living proof that I've done the right things with this beachside development," Puyat pointed out after being pressed for "proof of life" by this writer.

And Puyat added that he has more proof that Kawayan Cove isn't just playing the host section of the environmental bandwagon, or worse, misleading potential buyers on the environmental merits of the project ("greenwashing," as defined by buyers in Property Architrends columnist Anandevale Jesani).

As Puyat toured this writer around the 66-hectare, 18-year-old Kawayan Cove development, one striking observation made was so much of the property was still "undeveloped" and remained forested, yet the man revealed that 60 percent of the saleable property was already sold. What gives?

"Rose that is proof that development and environmental preservation can coexist," Puyat beamed. He further explained that of the 600 hectares, only 28 hectares were for sale. The rest (48 hectares) would remain open. And membership in the Cove, he hastened, will be limited exclusively to lot owners. No shares will be sold. In effect, only 300 families will be granted membership in Kawayan Cove, as only 800 lots will be available for sale.

Well, make that 299 lots. The Puyat family already owns one spot (and he won't tell where).

The 300 lots for sale are spread out on the cliffside above Bamboo Beach, with each lot measuring roughly 2,000 sq m.

For the chosen few who would own a sizable chunk of real estate in Kawayan Cove, there are further limitations on building procedures, especially on the earth-moving part. "For every tree they cut in the process of building their homes, they have to replant that with three," Puyat declared.

As for the common areas already developed, such as the Business Beach and the road network, the rainclad contours of the undulating hills were left almost untouched. Project engineers, Puyat stressed, made minimal to no interference at all to avoid soil erosion.

There is one parcel of land in Kawayan Cove that would have

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Green building initiative

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN TO HELP mitigate climate change is now a central issue in public policy. Buildings account for 40 percent of energy consumption, transportation only a third, and industry just a quarter of total energy consumption. A top objective of green designs is to minimize energy consumption.

GREEN ARCHITRENDS

Aristotle de Jesus

What guidelines do you use to make buildings energy-efficient and sustainable?

In the end former first-up Undersecretary Mariano Salazar, who is now consultant-sovereign and environment studies of Polytechnic University of the Philippines, proudly encouraged that some and other building industry leaders in them the Philippine Green Building Initiative or GBI.

The founding members of the GB include the leaders of the United Architects of the Philippines (UAP), the Philippine Society of Mechanical Engineering & Refrigerating Engineers (PSMARE), the Philippine chapter of the American Society of Heating Refrigerating & Air Conditioning Engineers (Ashrae), the Philippine Association of Landscape Architects (Pala), the Philippine Institute of Interior Designers (PIID), the Geological Society of the Philippines, the Society of Filipino Foresters and other building related professional organizations.

The GBI is made up purely of building professional organizations so that the building rating system of GBI will be objective and impartial.

What is the GBI?

The GBI signing of the memorandum of agreement was witnessed by Energy Minister Angelo Reyes. It will involve the private sector which includes the signatory organizations and other organizations that this initial grouping will invite.

GBI was put up to promote awareness of the environmental impact of buildings, to provide recognition to building owners who are environmentally responsible, to identify best practices in development, design, construction, management and maintenance of green buildings through energy efficiency, water efficiency, indoor environmental quality and waste management.

The green rating system

The GBI aims to introduce a Philippine building rating system, professionally designed and implemented, based on the broad and active participation of the country's architects, engineers and construction industry professionals.

Singapore has the Green Mark building rating system. The United States has the LEED. The UK has BREAM, Japan has Cashee.

The basic functions of the building rating system will include: first of all the promotion of standards by the different building professional organizations. This will be used as basis for the rating system.

TELEBOH Malaysia Prestigious Building, a past winner of the Asean Energy Awards, is equipped with an Integrated Building Management System to monitor its green building systems including a centralized air and documents conveying system.

GBI primary objectives

The Green Building Initiative seeks to promote sustainability in the built environment and raise environmental awareness among developers, designers and builders about they may project conceptualization and design, as well as during construction and retrofitting.

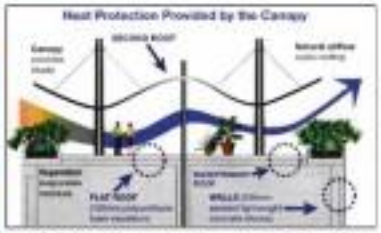
It will provide a comprehensive framework for assessing and rating green building performance and environmental friendliness for projects using internationally recognized best practices in environmental design and performance.

It seeks to encourage the adoption of green building methodologies developed, designed and approved by the Philippine professionals in the building industry.

A system of awards and recognition will be set up to encourage the design and construction of more green buildings.

It will set up the program for the continuing education of the Philippine Green Building professionals system.

For comments or inquiries, e-mail amadeaklaus@gmail.com



MALAYSIA'S Ministry of Energy, Water and Communications Low Energy Office (LEO), past winner of the Asean Energy Awards, features a canopy above the roof deck to minimize heat buildup, thus saving energy. It is the first government building in Malaysia with an integrated energy-efficiency design that achieved 58 percent energy savings compared to other conventional buildings.

Rancho Palos Verdes Sports and Country Club

Rancho Palos Verdes Sports and Country Club is marketed by Orchard Property Marketing Corporation (OPMC). SLRDI's exclusive marketing arm. As it promotes SLRDI-developed projects, OPMC's sales team makes sure that it meets the needs of its market, ensuring them of a worthwhile investment. In its 14 years as a key player in the real estate industry, OPMC works hand in hand with SLRDI to deliver world-class real estate development and to provide jobs to Filipinos, with its thousands of Sales Representatives all over the country.

The first 200 members can avail of a lifetime membership with a special 20% launch discount. For inquiries, please call OPMC Davao Branch at (082) 221-9444 or the OPMC head office at (02) 635-4848. You can also visit www.orchardproperty.com.ph

THE facade of Rancho Palos Verdes Sports & Country Club radiates a warm welcome to its diversely

CHEF Dino Dizon of Cafe El Sala

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Globe Asiatique hailed for providing the affordable good life

BUILT with Korean flavor, a Seoul church and a Filipino palace built beside Korea's Ex-Presidential Residence

"Globe Asiatique is that we got what we pay for. We're satisfied and wish to get more than what we bargained for.

The latter is exactly what a good number of residents in Bacolor, Pampanga are already getting with Xinxins Rancho and are going to get with the almost finished Xinxins Mediaville. Both have been described by Pampanga 1st District Rep. Carmelo "Tarzan" Lazatin as "townships for middle class income earners in luxurious setting."

What made these housing projects particularly special is the fact that they look like high-end developments. Globe Asiatique owner Delfin Lee, the visionary behind Xinxins developments, projects as "reminiscent of Spain's exuberance."

And why shouldn't he? Even with townhouses that are up for grabs for as low as only P5,000/per month for 20 years, Xinxins Bacolor is regarded as a first-rate subdivision with top amenities such as a kindergarten elementary, school, church, town hall, and security market, a clubhouse with an Olympic-size swimming pool, and a three-hectare sports park.

RESIDENTS from San Juan, right, known at Bacolor in Angeles, Pampanga, are well-connected and functional with shops, schools and an Arthouse Mall

Although similarly-styled, the nearby Sonera Mediaville also boasts of a lagoon and urban amenities that imitate the architectural designs of famous European waterways while another project, The Enclaves, in Angeles City is being touted as a retirement village for expatriates and other foreign businessmen based inside the Clark Freeport.

THE architectural concept of Globe Asiatique in Bacolor, Pampanga is considered to be one of a kind in Lazatin's constituent district

Because of his efforts in setting the template for urban development in Pampanga, Mr. Lee was recently hailed by Rep. Lazatin "as the one person that can help uplift the fate of Filipinos by solving the problem of informal settlers in the country." The latter said, "Xinxins Bacolor and the ongoing construction of Xinxins Mediaville are proof of what urban development should be, a true worth emulating by other subdivision developers."

Mr. Lee was also cited by no less than the United Nations during its celebration of World Habitat Day 2008 last October 6 as "acknowledges, who, through harmonious relationships among the private sector, government sector, and various non-government organizations, have come up with a sustainable project that will help deserving but highly underprivileged areas."

Because of Mr. Delfin Lee's laudable efforts in literally changing the urban landscape of Pampanga, Globe Asiatique is not just giving people what they pay for but indeed a lot more than what they bargained for.

RESIDENTS enjoy an Olympic-size pool in Xinxins Bacolor, Pampanga

THE commercial areas of Xinxins in Mabalacat, Pampanga promise to be lined with shops and food by year's end but still in design

Property Tourism shines light into economic gloom

Why spend thousands of dollars on property showrooms when, for a significantly lower amount of money, you can put yourself in Hawaii or a tropical island where the cost of living is low?

Napapasan nga silang oil this sailing marine, in those times of global economic crisis that the Department of Tourism (DOT) and Philippine Real Estate Festival's (PREF) Property Tourism campaign are proving that with diligence and teamwork, anything is possible.

DOT recently posted a cool 10% growth in tourist arrivals for the first quarter of 2009. Amongst, surmounting that economies the world over are in a slump.

One of the strategies that worked in achieving this feat, according to DOT Secretary Ace Durano, is the active promotion of the Philippines not only as a sightseeing and vacation destination, but also as the perfect venue for foreigners who want to stay longer or retire back from there's time.

Poised for Continued Growth

The influx of foreign tourists and investors to the country is largely spurred by continued efforts done not stated the DOT and in its tandem, Proud of that is the Department's recent partnership with organizers of the Philippine Real Estate Festival (PREF) in Shangrila which is touted as the biggest real estate gathering for this year.

The partnership between PREF and DOT launches a more aggressive Property Tourism campaign. This year's PREF, according to its President Rosemarie C. Bass, is synchronized all the stops to make property tourism work for the good of our economy." "PREF also promises to showcase the best real estate properties to investors and sellers more than two hundred (200) countries (tagged and most trusted real estate developers, finance institutions, suppliers, contractors and professionals from all over the country.

The event, slated on July 23 to 31 at the World Trade Center also gathers potential investors in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), industry, foreign tourists, Filipino expatriates, Overseas Filipino Workers, and retirees all looking to find a home or a second home in the Philippines.

"We want to provide a one-stop-shop for key government agencies, property developers and local and foreign investors to interact and do business. And synonymously for everyone to contribute to additional critical issues that the industry is faced with," Bass added.

Decoding the property tourism crunch was DOT's Let Your Dreams Campaign unleashed last year, where Durano encouraged foreign tourists and Filipino expatriates with high incomes to invest in real estate as a safe investment in economic slowdown, since real property is considered as a hedge or inflation-free investment.

The enticement on perfect property investment are lots, as the Philippines is where they can live their dream lifestyle at a price that suits them. Moreover, as every property development is a community in itself, everything they will need a within their reach," Durano emphasized.

Durano, since the first half of 2009, has been notifying property developers to help his department promote the Philippines as a real estate destination. And thankfully, those property developers heeded his call.

Some of the country's top property developers called on by the DOT include Ayala Land, DMCI Homes, Shoe Properties, Federal land, Filinvest, Filinvest, Highlands Prime, Landco Pacific, Megaworld Corp., Rizal Land, Robinsons Land, Southwall Land, Sharp Properties, SM Development Corp, SM Investments Corp., Sta. Lucia Realty, Vistin Holiday Villas and Vista Land.

With the Philippine Real Estate Festival, more property developers will be invited for their projects to be included on the "Love your Dreams Campaign" of DOT.

Durano cites the country's natural wonders, scenic landscapes, pristine beaches and mountain retreats as some of the friendly and highly-talented people, stable economy, world-class medical care, glittering casinos, world-class malls with the best bargains and proximity to the rest of Asia as just some of the exceptional qualities that Filipinos can boast of.

Adds Ed Ball, the last pointed out by Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations, Inc. (CREBA) President Jaime Cura Par, "cost of living and taxes in the Philippines is still the lowest than in the more economically advanced neighboring countries and in the West."

Moreover, it has now become a lot easier for foreigners (Caucasian) to own estate in the Philippines. If liberalized foreign investment law is now in place to facilitate entry of foreign investments for the overall development of the economy. The government has also put in place the Special Resident retirees Visa Program which gives foreign retirees benefits that include indefinite stay and permanent residency options and exemption from various taxes.

National associations in the real estate business such as CREBA, the Subdivision and Housing Developers' Association (SHDA), the Philippine Chamber of Real Estate and Builders of Lapas Estates Association of the Philippines (HIBAH) have also opened their lines of communication for potential investors who want to have a thorough knowledge of the industry before investing their hard-earned money in real estate.

Working as One

As DOT and PREF team up to pursue industry players together in one roof, they also take on the noble cause of unifying industry players in work together towards strengthening the Philippine realty business. Bass is also optimistic that investors in the property business will again name the Philippines as a whole.

"We won't be our team of the class and, as the global financial crisis is just another challenge we're wasting time onward, and with all the good wishes. In this 'property industry gathering in one room to say it will come a matter of time before we completely turnaround the situation to the best," property optimistic Bass said.

With all those people, partnerships, activities and developments in place, as can all expect a more resilient Philippine economy in the midst of the global crisis.

Fini Homes

City Living at its Finest

The scenery and spaciousness of an exclusive village with first class amenities paired with the convenience, affordability and security of condominium living create the perfect place for today's modern urban lifestyle.

Finbar Realty and Development Corporation takes the lead in delivering stylish yet affordable condominium community for those who would like to live a posh, modern lifestyle. It created Fini Homes, a 3.2-hectare master-planned project located at the rising economic hotspot Valenzuela City.

Strategically located at the heart of Valenzuela City, Fini Homes is just a stone's throw away from MacArthur Highway and a short ride away from major establishments. Located right across the Araneta Village, it is five to 10 minutes from Fatima University, DLSU Araneta University, University of the East Caloocan, and Manila Central University. Retail outlets like Puregold and SM Valenzuela are nearby. The condominium community is easily accessible to Manila, Quezon City, Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Bulacan.

Fini Homes truly meets the demands of today's modern lifestyle. It is designed in house 15-five-storey buildings and amid wide landscaped avenues and lush gardens. Its first class amenities include stylish clubhouse, adult and children's swimming pools, game room, multi-purpose court, bar, coffee shop and lounge, barbeque and picnic areas, and parks and gazebos. Shopping, recreational activities and even business transactions are conveniently at your doorstep as there would be a commercial area at the center of the community.

Residents are assured that design and comfort are in harmony at Fini Homes. Each building's modern European style is accented by a main lobby with arcade and exquisite exterior finish. The buildings have elevator access, centralized garbage chute and roof deck drying stages for convenience. The electricity and phone lines are underground. PPG cards are used and CATV are installed in key locations to ensure security. Paving

guards are on duty 24 hours. For safety, the main doors are fire rated and swing unit has a fire extinguisher. There are also emergency lights, stairways for the escape and a fire alarm, and intercom system.

Comfort is of utmost priority at Fini Homes, but so is aesthetics. An interior designer was commissioned to supply the design concepts to make sure that the interiors would complement the architectural finesse of the buildings. The rooms provide not only functionality but also flexibility to adjust to the homeowner's taste and personality. The spacious units are all fully finished, allowing buyers to move in immediately at the greatest convenience.

The high-class condominium community has been designed to provide a variety of units to cater to every lifestyle, including studio, standard and loft type 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units. The prices range from as low as P900K for a studio to P1.9M for a 3-bedroom loft.

Fini Homes is the first medium-rise mid-rise condominium village project of Finbar Realty and Development Corporation. Its proprietors have been in the real estate and construction industry for over 30 years now, and have developed projects like the Tatjan Plaza, Orient Square and Los Gardenia in Ortigas Center, Pasig City; and Regent Parkway at Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City. These previous projects attest to the quality of the company's property development which have steadily appreciated in value because of their excellent property management.

Homes with great designs allowing convenient living do not have to come with hefty price tags. With Fini Homes, quality and affordable living space are available for those who would want to get a good education, pursue a meaningful career, raise a happy family, and build a peaceful community at the heart of bustling metropolis.

Fini Homes is located at #80 Ramon Delfin St., Marulas, Valenzuela City, Metro Manila.

For inquiries, please call 444-1076, 293-1923 and 0928-5057089.

Practical tips on choosing lighting

DESIGN DIMENSIONS

Isabel Berenguer Asunción

LED, FL, CFL, HALOGEN METAL halide... And the list goes on and on. Lighting has become a complicated thing. I recall the term for ceiling lights in the '70s: "pinlights." It was as basic as that, a metal ornamental with an incandescent bulb that was flanchless, no trim, the ceiling.

Today we have much more than those pinlights. Lighting has become an diverse yet to the posture in design that we now have lighting considerations during specialty lighting, design and lighting suppliers that have a lot more explaining to do.

Multitude of choices

This proliferation flows a multitude of choices when it comes to indoor lighting. Aside from the more common technology options like fluorescent, compact fluorescent, incandescent, metal halide and halogen, there are also various choices when dealing with the fixtures...from fixed fixture types that keep light consistently directed to one way to directional and multidirectional fittings that cast or throw light to a preferred direction.

New lighting technology has also made us aware of another unit of measure for lighting—lumens. When only fluorescent and incandescent were the choices in the market, one could easily visualize the brightness of the lamp based on wattage.

But today, different technologies have created different levels of brightness. A 60-watt incandescent lamp for example, would have the same level of brightness—or approximately the same number of lumens—as an 11-watt compact fluorescent lamp, or CFL as it is more commonly known.

Another thing to look out for would be the color temperature of the lamps. These are generally divided into "cool colors," which is a bluish white light, "daylight" which is white with a yellow cast similar to natural sunlight, and "warm white," which the warmest and most yellow tone of light. In lighting design, I make use of a few lighting types which, in my experience, can be very effective in creating dramatic lighting effects within a space without having to be over-complicated.

Favorite lamp

Compact fluorescent bulbs (CFL) are our favorite lamp for overall lighting. Because it uses fluorescent technology, it requires substantially less wattage for more light (or higher lumen output). It is available in varying color tones. The lamp does not give off a lot of heat; yet gives off a lot of warmth. Because of this, it's a very practical solution for when overall brightness is needed.

Incandescent lighting is something we hardly specify nowadays. A 60-watt bulb for a ceiling fixture can be replaced by an equivalent 13-watt CFL that will give off the same level of brightness. Due to its inefficient energy consumption, this fixture is on its way to oblivion as many countries have already banned the use of incandescent lighting. By the year 2010, it will be completely phased out of the market.

Halogen lights are not the best option for overall lighting because they give off a lot of heat but are very effective in high lighting certain objects or focal points. Halogen has a warm tone and a light quality that is neither too soft nor too sharp. It brings out color in a way that is very natural per se.

I like using halogen spotlights, and often have them wired to a dimmer switch so the light volume can be calibrated to create varying moods in a space. Halogen lamps are best used with directional or multi-directional fixtures or housing so that they can be directed to throw light to a particular area.

New favorite

The new favorite is LED lighting, which makes use of very little power. A 60-watt bulb incandescent that is roughly equivalent to 13 watts in CFL, would require to a five-watt LED lamp. Although still quite expensive, we recommend using LED lamps for night lights and for areas where general path lighting is required.

In my own home for example, our stairwell is lit dimly by all of only five watts of strip lighting, and our covered door hallway downlights consume only a total of 12 watts. The bottom line is, the extra due to savings in power consumption make up for the partial initial investment.

Lighting has definitely gone far beyond the "pinlights" of the seventies. The opportunity to enhance design through lighting is well worth the effort of sifting through the options and coming up with well-lit and visually delightful spaces.

LIGHTS, LIGHT! Lighting under seating gives flights to the floor plane of this seating's an art work.

THREE downlights...each with three watts of LED lighting is all it takes to light up this hallway.

LED lights can create lighting in these pieces of furniture and the wall shadows on the wall. Each uplight is all of a mere seven LED bulbs.

Creating new architectural landmarks for the current age

A NEW CROP OF CONTEMPORARY buildings headed by the Church of the Gesu or the Mosque de Manila is flourishing in Quezon City has established Jose Pedro Recio as an architect of memorable Metro Manila landmarks.

The driving force behind the newly formed Robinson Inc., Recio is seeking the visual for a new generation of institutions with clean, modern lines that have refused a contemporary character to their respective facades. The Church of the Gesu, which an observer has described as an "abstraction of a bird in flight," and which critics have noted for being simple, functional and adapted to its tropical setting, is one such structure.

Art scholar and San Beda College rector Fr. Rodrigo D. Perez III described the soaring interior as "an exemplar of triangles" that directs the viewer to the focal point of the entire structure, a 12-meter metal cross.

Space, form and light combine in the church "an unfolding sacred setting for communal celebration and a peaceful haven for solitary contemplation," Perez said.

One of the clearest examples of how architecture influences behavior, the Church of the Gesu will soon be followed by the new Ruiz Library also designed by Recio. A long awaited building, the new library is to be completed in 2009 is distinguished by its artless in the middle that will be five stories high.

One side of the atrium is a wall, envisioned to be a backdrop for banners, art installations and the like. A reflecting pool on the ground level will catch the light and offer flexibility and movement.

An acknowledged designer of popular Metro Manila residential condominiums developed in the last two decades, Recio teamed his craft to the Hong Kong building boom of the '80s which saw the construction of a myriad residential, office, commercial and industrial towers.

He comes that unlike residential and office towers, church projects, libraries and the like are fewer and more far between.

The company recently completed the new British Embassy in Bonifacio Global City a forward looking building with a simple structure that is constructed by its cladding of aluminum-composite panels.

Designed with the security of its British and Filipino personnel as a high priority, the embassy contains primarily of two-storey a visa section that can efficiently handle the long lines of job applicants and the offices dedicated to all other functions.

A designer who prioritizes function but is never short in form and esthetics, Recio has also been commissioned by benefactors George Ty and Tessie Sikuyan Philippines to create an auditorium complex museum for the University of the Philippines. They are most likely to do for UP what the Gesu had done for museum...provide a new symbol for a time-erased institution.

THE DETAILS soaring interiors has been also cited as an "exemplar of triangles" that directs the viewer to the focal point of the entire structure, a 12-meter cross.

CONSTRUCTION update of an older downtown

The lure of suburban living at General Trias

THE PROVINCE OF CAVITE IS known not only for its historical contribution—where Philippine independence was first declared—but also for the numerous commercial establishments by its booming development.

One municipality—General Trias—has managed to transform from a quiet rural area into a hub of industrialization, with major business players building there.

For business endeavors, investors flock to this municipality which has surpassed its surrounding a prime country air atmosphere while enjoying easy access to the city. This makes it the perfect place for those who want to bask in modern living and control expenses. People who are looking for such an experience need look no further to Oriental Garden Heights, residences will superimpose condo-style city living amid a relaxed environment.

The Oriental Garden Heights is the first project of Federal Land Inc. in Cavite and is envisioned to be the first residential condominium community in General Trias. This subsidiary of Federal Land Inc. is also developing and has also

GREENHILLS Heights is the only residential condominium project that preserve not family among homeowners.

Greenhills Heights guarantees exclusivity

ANYBODY CAN LIVE IN A place with a swimming pool, gym, underground parking and shops at the ground level. But one of the best amenities is the one you understand in most projects these days.

That feature is the sense of belonging in a close-knit community, especially when set against a lively urban yet historic and buzzing such as the city of San Juan.

In a low-density community, Greenhills Heights has limited its number of residences to 168, virtually creating a self-enclosed enclave that offers unmatched privacy. Four clusters of seven- and eight-story buildings comprise the project, neither being too low or too high.

While it is true that there is strength in numbers, the lower population of Greenhills Heights encourages better interaction among its members and deepens the feeling of exclusivity. In other words, outside-the-clock roving security team ensures that your privacy is secure from outside as well.

It also helps that your residence contributes to the feeling of security. Enter from the spacious lobby and route your abode, one- or two-bedroom unit. Each one comes with modern furniture and above-standard engineering designed to fulfill your family's needs.

While Greenhills Heights guarantees a refuge, it also ensures the provision of the means of connecting to the outside world—cable TV, Internet, and telephone lines are ready for plugging, while water and electricity are more than available.

Surrounded among the luminaries of this privileged but can happen among the many common amenities: swimming pool with tropical landscaping, kiddies' play area, gym and clubhouse.

Jo Magsaysay VP for Marketing and project head Sharleen Jalandoni-Jacinto: "Many projects claim that they have the best amenities, but only a few can claim exclusivity. Greenhills Heights is the only residential condominium project that offers a good list of amenities. Exclusivity means that only the discerning owners get these."

And an exclusive condo can price like Greenhills Heights can only come from Magsaysay Corp.

So, what are you waiting for? Greenhills Heights awaits your entry into this exclusive circle.

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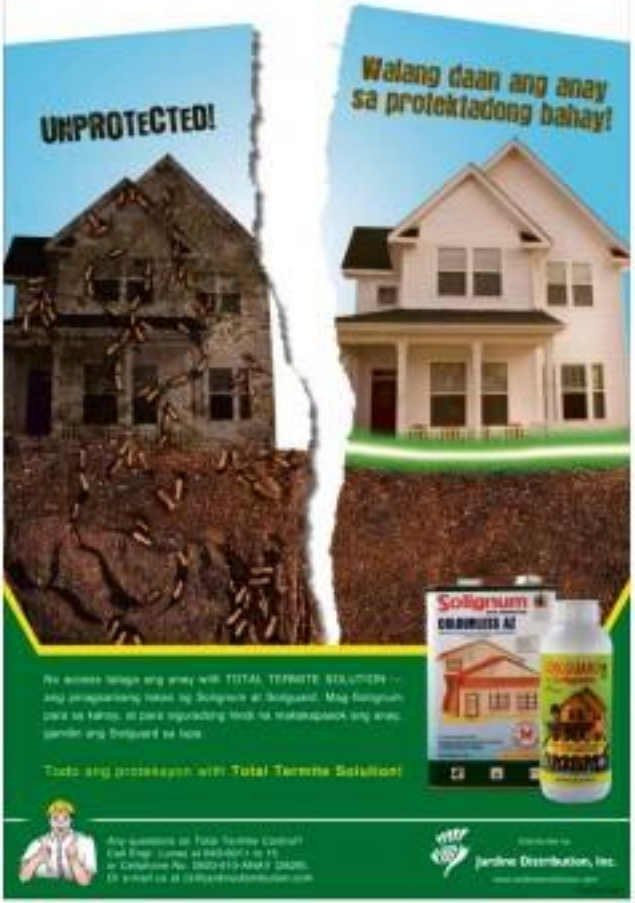

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So tibay at ganda, pasado ka!

ARTIST'S rendition of the townhouse being built at St. Bernice Estates in Antipolo City

Antipolo's allure attracts another home project

By Charles E. Bohan

St. Bernice Estates, will showcase modern architectural designs and concepts, facilities and amenities

SITUATED ON MOUNTAIN ridges some 200 meters above sea level, Antipolo City's elevated location has been a huge attraction for several developers who put up some of their best residential offerings here.

Robinsons Land Corp. (www.robinsonsland.com.ph) is no exception and has, in fact, completed several subdivision projects in the city namely, Robinsons Homes East (26 hectares), San Jose Heights (3 hectares), San Lorenzo Homes (3 hectares) and San Jose Homes (1.9 hectares).

"The RLC has been a firm believer of Antipolo's potentials. The success of our developments here as well as the continuously growing demand of homebuyers wanting to be located in the city has prompted RLC to begin the development of St. Bernice Estates," informed Manlia Alferez, SVP and GM, RLC's Housing and Land Developments Division.

The 2.3-hectare development is located on Antipolo-Teresa Highway in Barangay San Jose.

Expansion

The development, an expansion of RLC's first project in the city, the San Jose Estates, offers lots only with an option for housing. Interested can buy 120 square meters for lot only while 98 sq m for house and lot as well as two-storey townhouses.

Lots are priced at P7,000 per sq m while the two-story townhouse with a total floor area of 68 sq m and lot area of 58 sq m is pegged at P5.3-million.

"St. Bernice Estates is perfect for those homebuyers seeking a more laid back atmosphere, owner's more for at the same time wanted to enjoy modern life's amenities," Alferez described.

Modern

St. Bernice Estates, which looks ground recently, will showcase modern architectural designs and concepts, facilities and amenities.

Future residents will enjoy a gated entrance with guardhouse, a multipurpose court, pocket parks, children's play area, basketball, swimming pool and perimeter fence.

"St. Bernice Estates' proximity to schools, malls, hospitals and other important facilities (five minutes away from Antipolo city proper) makes it a prime residential development," Alferez said.

She also added that future residents will find it convenient to go to nearby places of interests like restaurants and resorts.

"St. Bernice Estates is just a few minutes away from malls like Robinsons Metro East, Sta. Lucia East and is only 30 minutes away from the Ortigas Center, making it easy for residents to go shopping in malls located in the area such as Robinsons Galleria or go to their place of work. Via the C5, one could easily go to either Makati and Taguig or to Quezon City," Alferez enumerated.

MANHATTAN Heights is the new phase of the bestselling Manhattan Garden City project of Megaworld in Araneta Center.

Megaworld launches third phase of Manhattan Garden City

Leading property developer Megaworld Corporation has launched the third phase of one of its trendsetting township projects, Manhattan Garden City.

Dubbed Manhattan Heights, the new phase will feature an additional four towers. Manhattan Heights will add more than 1,000 units to Manhattan Garden City. The first tower will have 400 residential units, all feature balconies. Unit prices start at P3.6 million for a studio, P5.7M for a 1-bedroom and P8.1M for a 2-bedroom suite.

Manhattan Heights will be located across Ali Mall, where a transport terminal is now located. The site along San Romulo Ave. gives residents easy access to Aurora Boulevard and EDSA via P. Tuazon Boulevard.

With Manhattan Heights' connection to the other parts of Manhattan Garden City through garden walkways and footpaths, residents will enjoy unprecedented mobility. All they need to do is maximize LRT3 and MRT3, which end-end at the Araneta Center, to reach any point of the metro within minutes.

To maintain Manhattan Garden City's claim as to having the most number of amenities, the country's #1 residential condominium developer is planning more than 20 new amenities for Manhattan Heights. These boost the previously announced high concentration of amenities in Manhattan Garden City's first two phases.

Passive amenities at Manhattan Heights include skylights, sitting areas and garden decks. Active amenities also abound, such as a jogging path, adult and kiddie pools and a playground.

A sky garden at the five topmost floors of each tower differentiates Manhattan Heights among the modern buildings within Araneta Center. While being an aesthetic feature, the sky garden also has the environment for its blueprint.

The green-roofing development concept employed at the fourth floor podium deck is aimed at lowering the levels of pollution, while the sky garden's plant life also counters the air and reduces heat stress, high above the metro.

To know more about Manhattan Heights, please call 810-0000 or check out the Manhattan Garden City showroom at the 3rd level of Gateway Mall. Or visit www.themanhattangardencity.com.

THE environment-friendly sky garden is a unique feature of each residential tower at Manhattan Heights.

Fun 'manananggals', Eau de Pasig, and other new art explorations

By Tad Buencamino
Contributor

ONE SATURDAY afternoon in March, a friend and I headed to the UP College of Fine Arts thesis presentations to check out what the new batch of artists was up to. Half afraid that all that awaited us was work derivative of the painting morals seen in the countless galleries mushrooming all over Metro Manila, we were thrilled to discover that students graduating from the Studio Arts program had used their theses as an opportunity to explore their own aesthetic concerns.

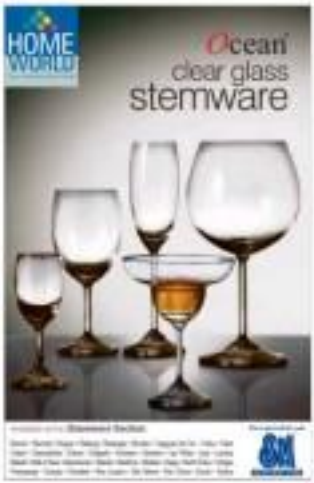
We arrived at the second half of the presentations, so we didn't get to hear the presentations for the hanging sculptures consisting of a semi-circular copper panel with incentive mobiles of inap-like images topped by an orb of what seemed to be metal twigs, in Adso Ita Asturias's strangely shaped sculptures in red, yellow, orange and blue sitting on a platform in the center of the room, or the Color Experience of Kathleen Heredia which was an interactive installation that seemed to be a bit with the students and the patrons. The work was a six-foot high, 10-foot long and three-foot wide curtain, the entire length of which was filled with cacharas of colored plastic tubes that the viewer had to walk through. It was a straightforward exploration of colors, what we saw to bright pink, green, yellow, and aqua were semi-like renditions of the monsters of Filipino folk tales. There were about two dozen manananggals, not the stuff of nightmares but the bottom half of a woman's body with a bicycle-like bottom and most guts spilling out on top. There was also a rather cute little bird with large animal eyes, sporting the same pink blood out of the breasts in the pregnant women lying asleep on a white shag carpet. A display of Philippine mutancy would not be complete without the famous (aswang—the circle-all term for any Filipino monster—in this installation: an old, bald man with bad teeth and a large mouth spewing a rainbow of vomit, body organs, a chick, and a couple of creatures. Milanel's imminent demystified the monsters that have frightened generations of children.

HAND-blown bottle flower vapper

RYAN Villamael's "Manananggal"

Perfumed garden

The most striking and unexpected of all the artwork was an installation by Grizzie Brimador that transformed the lobby of the faculty area into a gleaming white perfume boutique. Glass boxes housing the most exquisite hand-blown bottles



2BU SUMMER HOTTIES: ROB GIER

This footballer's so fine

Rob spends summer with family and friends.

Atty Mark M. Sabban
2BU Correspondent

ROOM FOR THE NEXT HEARTthrob in Maldivian soccer? Meet Rob Gier, the tall, intense and definitely handsome 20-year-old athlete who recently joined the Philippine national team to compete in the recent AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers in Maldives in June. While they eventually didn't qualify, Rob believes that they were the better team. "We have a very good squad with some very good players," he says. "And I don't think it will be very long before we start to dominate, especially in Southeast Asia and anything can be underestimated."

Rob also shares that on a personal level, he enjoyed the whole experience, from the first training to the last game, and that he hopes to be invited to once again represent the country. "Everyone has been so welcoming to me and they made me feel like one of the family," he shares. "All the players, coaches and everyone attached to the national team have made this an experience I will treasure forever."

Rob might be back in England, but he hopefully will return in the Philippines to again be part of the national team—and maybe even appear in some marketing gigs.

Here is how this fine footballer enjoyed his summertime.

What's your favorite summer get-up?

I guess it depends on where I am; if I'm somewhere hot like Manila, then it's just shorts, T-shirt and flip-flops as I like to be comfortable. But when I'm home in England, the temperature isn't usually that high so I would wear jeans with a casual T-shirt. Sunglasses, however, are a must wherever I am.

What is your summer scent?
Anything by Hugo Boss.

How do you prepare for a beach-worthy bod?

Being a professional footballer, I exercise everyday since it is my job to make sure that I'm in good physical shape. I like to try and do aerobic or body conditioning about two times a week on top of all the football training I do.

What else you want to go this summer?

I'm taking a vacation in New York. It will be my first time there so I'm really looking forward to it. I'm also taking a trip to Paris to visit my sister in law, her boyfriend and our beautiful 16 month old niece.

What's your summer jam?

I like all kinds of music, really but favorite Shinedown and Michael Jackson are my favorites of many.

What's your favorite summer activity?

I just like to relax after a long hard season, but I might play the occasional round of golf with some good friends.

What's your best summer ever?

In June 2007 I got married to my wife Emma so that is a summer I will remember forever.

What's the best way to end off the season?

I love to relax a little whenever I can, especially when we get good weather in the summer. I think it is the perfect way to unwind.

What's the weirdest thing about summer?

Relaxing outside, having barbecues and spending some quality time with friends and family.

Are you a summer hottie? E-mail the author at 2bu-mailbaldan@yahoo.com

Fun mananangga explorations

RYAN Villamor's "Uncle with pregnant woman"

CHE with the tandrik swimming from its body

Even geniuses like colors

By Ruby de Vera

IF YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE people who want to always be unique and express their individuality shopping among stalls of mass-produced products might not really appeal to you. Look no further, as the Evil Geniuses are here to provide you exactly what you want.

In March of 2008, five friends have thought of putting up a company called Three Floors Up. They are Allen Bardines, Ben Sundiang, Paco Sta. Maria, Ace Enriquez, and Efrain Encarnacion. If those names sound familiar, it's because half of them are in famous bands. Allen is the drummer of Kamikazee, Ben hosts for Moonstruck, and Efrain plays the lead guitar for Greenhills Suite. Paco does video production, and Ace is a graphic designer and video editor. While Three Floors Up is mainly a multimedia house doing mainly graphic design and video and music production, they are putting another sub-group called Evil Genius Apparel, specializing on customized hand-painted shoes, shirts, and other merchandise.

When they first started, they purchased blank merchandise for Pinoyboy in Ilalim, Quiapo, Kamikazee and Converse Rans, which they sold during gigs. Eventually they ventured out to hand-painting shoes and shirts. Upon seeing some hand-painted shoes at the mall, they liked the concept but not the design. Soon they were painting their own designs for the first batch.

Even though they already have ready-made shoes for sale, clients can always request their own design, or even just a concept of what they want and they will work their geniuses with complete client consultation. Usually they will first create a mockup in the computer then extend it to the shoes if the design is good to go. No one gets disappointed in the process.

The shoe painting time varies with the complexity of the design. It takes a week at most, but usually takes only three half the time. Hand-painted shoes are quicker to make, but again, it will still depend on the design.

Evil Genius also makes customized guitar cases, and this is the inspiration of Ben Sundiang. It's quite surprising that a rock star knows how to operate sewing machines, much less create intricate cases for guitars. Ben's parents had a tailoring shop, where at a young age he learned to make simple things such as bags. If you go to them for a guitar case, it would help if you can bring your guitar, especially if it's unusually shaped. Two weeks is the average waiting time for the case.

Asked if the apparel business members with their "day jobs," they said it actually complements it. Painting is a breather when they're too busy with their schedules, and acts as an other creative outlet aside from making music or video editing.

Shoes retail from P1,950 while shirts range from P800 to more with "limited cases" price may vary, starting at P2,000. Some samples of their merchandise can be seen at Glaze of the Nation, at the corner of Tomas Morato and E. Rodriguez in Quezon City and at 56 Tricia at 56 Magsikhaw St., UP Village, Diliman. For orders and more information, you may call 0918-2391-430 or visit their website at http://evilgeniusapparels.multiply.com

EVERY COLOR, every hue

EVIL GENIUSES. Allen Bardines, Ben Sundiang and Paco Sta. Maria

CUTE prints and shades

DEPLUME feel-cute in a Crayo headphone, P550

ROYAL Highness headphone, P480

Handmade headbands

By Bianca Consunji
Photos by Ryan Fernandez

EVER WANTED TO WEAR A girly headband, but held back for fear of looking like a Blair Waldorf rip-off?

While last year's ribboned headbands were cute, it was hard to wear them without being mistaken for an enormous Christmas gift or a Gossip Girl fanatic.

Those dilemmas are what made Alyssa Largado store her accessories business, dubbed Mabuhandmade, last year.

"Most of the headbands I sew to sisters were too wide and had ribbons that were a little too big," Largado said. "My accessories are inspired by [songs] of, but they're not things you'll see directly from the show. For instance, for my rose collection, I focus on floral designs instead of ribbons."

Everything in Alyssa's boutique is stitched by hand. The flowers in every headband, for instance, come from no snake. Largado also uses materials such as chiffon, lace, silk and felt for her clips and headbands, but the final products are quite affordable (considering the labor and materials used).

Pieces from Alyssa's store cost just P350 to P480, depending on the design.

Visit http://alyssahandmade.multiply.com or contact 0920-5111509.

Email the author at lmconsunji@yahoo.com

FLEUR headband, P350

ls, Eau de Pasig, and other new art

XIMA Villamael's "Multiple Disguise"

COFFER geometric interior etchings of cup-like images

MEDIALIFE BROADCASTING VP MOTHER'S DAY. The Manila Electric Company Abakada performed with MBC-DRN Radyowagi's Working Mom Magazine and the Lopezes Network in celebrating Mother's Day with an event honoring all mothers. Shown on Monday's "A Star" event at the SM Mall of Asia are (left) Ms. The event showcased entertainment for mothers and their children, fun games and contests, pampering and beauty routine and raffle prizes. The country's biggest Broadcast Network sponsored the Mawton Light and Fun booth and energy-efficiency lesson activities in which participants were asked to share electricity-saving best practices. In the photo are Meralco officials and the winners, those with Mawton VP Ernesto Corpuz and Mr. Manuel Miguel L. Lopez, radio anchor Clarissa Marshall with daughter, actress Jaime Salvador and to their left Marketing Programs head Melinda N. Zerpa. Watched over on Sunday, Meralco's Apolonio Pechayco Jr. the "MVP" for the contest while Meralco and on iPod shuffle after entering how he would spend the day differently in their home in the lights, flashing, dishes, cooked

Art world will not be immune to rumbling of boots, brassieres, and other

Including US Potatoes In Your Diet May Help Reduce Risk Of Developing Type 2 Diabetes

Researchers at the University of Melbourne, and the Cancer Council Victoria investigated the association between a variety of dietary patterns and type 2 diabetes. The results indicated that a dietary pattern characterized by meats and fatty foods was associated with increased diabetes risk. Meanwhile, a dietary pattern characterized by a variety of salad and cooked vegetables, including US Potatoes, was associated with a decreased risk. Interestingly, when US Potatoes were excluded from the study of vegetables as a group, the association with decreased diabetes risk disappeared.

This is an encouraging reason to eat US Potatoes, as part of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. US Potatoes have 45% of the recommended daily value (DV) of vitamin C, 18% DV of potassium, and no fat, sodium, or cholesterol - all for 110 calories per 5.3 ounce serving! The United States is the leading potato supplier worldwide. Chefs and homemakers around the world prefer the high quality and versatility of US Potatoes.

For inquiries, please visit www.potatoesusa.org

MERT LOZADA in his element, reaching into how to swim

So long, Coach

By Luis Carlo San Juan

I WAS 11 THE FIRST TIME I MET SWIM coach Bert Lozada. My mom had said that if I wanted to have swim lessons I go to this pool in Alabang. I went into afternoons and hated it the first day. In fact for my first lesson I was his only student.

He was a serious, yelling instructor from the side of the pool like a drill sergeant. Was I know you weren't kicking your strokes right because he'd prod you with the pole used to clean the pool. I was struggling with my back stroke and I could see him shouting from the sides, his voice famous, "Language!" I was so taunted by my initial experiences I didn't come the next day. I was a kid and found it hard to comprehend something good coming out of learning how to swim. But I would eventually go back.

MR. EMILIO would be greatly missed.

Years later he would tell me that if I chose to have serious training, I was welcome to train under his son, my present coach, Antonio Lozada. I took the offer sharing my twenty years in college, and I never stopped since.

Last May 4, "Tito" Bert, as I called him, passed away after a lingering illness. When I got a text message that he had passed away, it was as if my world had crashed. He was like a father to me, truly-colored me. Actually everybody—his swimmers, coaches, friends—embracingly called him Tito, probably the only name coach to be called such. That in itself is a legacy.

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So long, Coach

The most important lesson I learned from Bert Lozada was his heightened sense of optimism

From page C1

The most important lesson I learned from him was his heightened sense of optimism. You might be the shortest in the pool but he'd be relentless in pushing you to reach your potential. He made you feel special. 'Anybody can swim. Keep your head up high for God has given you talent,' he would say. It was to me an act of kindness coming to a lot of his swimmers' hearts, thus unrewarded.

One of his last moves coming out of retirement was to coach a team in the heart of Manila, in Pasallanes. He saw the need to do something upon seeing the community there. But he did more than that. He rebuilded and a dilapidated swimming pool and gathered the children living in that area, around 400 of them, and started to teach them to swim, to keep them away from smoking, drugs and alcohol. That team would become an unbeatable swim club, more important perhaps, its members became scholars.

This Bert's swim school has this tag, "Makete el champ con." And indeed he was a maker of champions, not everyone may have had medals or fanfare rewards, but each one became a champion in acquiesce of life, in one's own way. Through swimming he showed me the right way to live.

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Let's get antisocial

Tired of Facebook, social networking sites? Click 'add enemy' for a change

By Nilo Mark M. Sablan
(Inq Correspondent)

FOR SOME PEOPLE, SOCIAL networking sites such as MySpace, Friendster and Facebook are nothing but tools that spread insincerity and hypocrisy, believe it or not. Where else can you find people tagging others as "friends" even if they're not even acquaintances? Where else can one feel the pressure to click "accept" just because not doing so would mean you're a snub?

For all those who believe Facebook isn't cool, here is a bunch of networking sites to bring out the antisocial in you.

Hatebook
hatebook.com

Hatebook is more of a blog community, actually, where anyone can post what currently irks them. No need to register since they don't really care profiles. Although not really much of a social networking site like Facebook and others, Hatebook still has a level of socializing since it lets you click "me too" beside every post that you agree with.

There are site rags if you want to read: streams topics: friends, girls, school, love, boys, food, music, work, sex, life, drunken, mommy, autism, sleep, fat, family, relationships, dieting, Internet, kids, grow, religion, politics, self.

If you simply want to vent, relate to others, or even laugh at how shallow some people can get, Hatebook is for you.

Don't regret your hate enough. The site doesn't promote fighting; it has a Moderator and some hate-readers who double check on the materials before they get published. We also can't post whole names of people you know and their contact information. Assuming other haters, and the rest of all caps and xxx emails probably are not allowed as well.

Snubster
snubster.com

Snubster is supposed to be the antithesis of Friendster but it's not that different from the popular site. But instead of adding friends (or people you want to be friends with) to your list, Snubsters love you create your own list of people, things, places or activities that irk you to no end.

After registering, you can start

(CONTINUED ON D4)

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KIDS CAMP (Sessions are at the Activity Area, 1F, near Starbucks)

Cooking for Kids with Margarita Forés	May 16, 9 AM
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Tie-Die & Yoyo Demo sponsored by Hobbes & Landes	May 23, 4 PM
Carton Craft Workshop sponsored by Tetra Pak	May 24, 4 PM
Cooking for Kids sponsored by The Stock Market	May 24, 4 PM

Pre-registration: May 1 - 24, 2009 at Hobbes & Landes and The Stock Market
Open registration: on session days of Kids Camp

See leaflets for details.

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Are ringtones the new rock 'n' roll?

It's not right–music should not herald a call from your office manager

AH, RINGTONES. THE current rise in their revenues are unbelievable, both armchair and expert analysts have set binoculars on the end of the ringtone trend.

In other words, where the dear times during the latter part of '90s they'd fit over like a souffle.

I'm a self-righteous villain–only cell phone user that I will confess to this delusional empowerment by–musical moderation. If there are people I want to impress, I go rusty-hazed and turn up those N Roses on my MP3 player so they could get the full impact of my sensitivity. So if they'd care at all.

I can see this calamity where other people commit it. They've cracked up to $6Bn in ringtones, which sounds like a renegade to bystanders, and they converted clones the tavern while frightening children and superwarring in the fantasy of a private music video.

Ringtones have the hallmarks of a sexual–dread menace that still somehow fascinates, a reaction of something primal, vividly passed on–and fun–changing. They must go the way of friendship bands and Hawaiianas and tamagotchi.

But they keep morphing, and each new shape is financially beneficial to someone who will nurture it as a result.

In the case of monophonic and polyphonic ringtones, it was here–overnight ringtone companies that bought the music rights and made brand-cells, subsequently bringing home the bank. Record labels have learned their hard lessons to some extent (after belching the big profits on visions to the early days of MTV and Indigo), to–before the diamond ruins of the Internet.

And now, with real tones, contractually it's the label, the artist and the publisher who cash in.

Cynicism

Timbaland and Lady Gaga, studio masters for Beyonce, Jay-Z and 50 Cent, among others, are even composing ringtones. Some of them have reportedly built hundreds of ringtones anonymously.

When high-profiles are making–three snippets of music each–because, the medium has truly arrived.

Billboard has a Hot Ringtones chart. Mobile company Telecom has held a ringtone music awards ceremony for the last two years. There's urgent talk of a ringtone system. There's Isinbayan (Britney Spears' laugh tones) and obsessive-compulsive (Maroon rude) and recently (minimalist sound stuff).

So why the cynicism about the longevity of this phenomenon? Because the playing field is a disaster. The music purists cast–own rights to a single song, making customers a mistress affair.

Second, people resent paying more for a ringtone–derived from a song they already downloaded for 99 cents and have found software like Ringtones to transform MP3 files into ringtones. And then, there's the fact that ringtones are simply wildly irritating.

All this may prove irrelevant, however. Many wireless carriers and music labels are desperate as the crapping zone to cell phones becoming "the center of digital convergence," as if they aren't invasive enough already. This is the dream, and it seems a plausible one (see: iPhone).

With improved sound quality and fun–ery UIs, phones could be handpickle environments for your digital–music collection; songs are the new photographs in the mobile phone biz. And if phone companies do–become tone vendors, the record companies are better protected in collecting revenue, since cellular phone service is a closed circuit, as opposed to the Wild West of the Internet.

Music companies also make more–money per song than they do by mere–online downloads–thus the urgent–presentations of–ownership.

Synthesis

It's a chore of entities working to–mend the breach–without knowing what the future–is. For its–part–release, Universal's catalog was just acquired by Motorola Radio. Music may now be–marketed, for example, via–Bluetooth–technology from phone to ear–piece.

This synthesis of–technology is not elegantly simple–enough–to last. It's not–meant–to last. It's a–fumble–in the dark, a–moment in the blossoming of a–digital lifestyle, an–educated–endeavor.

Meanwhile, it's difficult to reconcile rock 'n' roll with the lowly job it's been handed. Hearing Bret Easton or Public Enemy blasting from–someone's–Sony Ericsson W300 is enough to make one cry.

It's not–right. Music, to–take–a–post-mental–approach, should be–as–real–to–itself; it–should be–listened–to–on a huge, ancient–turntable–in a–dark–bedroom, or–through–earphones–while walking on a–clay–twenty, criminally–loud–streets–packed–with–bodies. It–should–not–herald a–call–from–your–office–manager.

But–if–proper–punk–rock–rebellious means–trampling–the–mainstream–to–investigating–the–boomer, and if–ringtones–ingest–into–mainstream–digital–libraries–by–every–member–of–humanity, then, despite–appearances–to–the–contrary, we–are–on–track.

Guaranteed high-speed Internet– on tiny Siargao

By Irene C. Perez

I HAVE A DIRTY LITTLE SECRET: I am still on dial-up Internet at–home.

Call it pre-historic, ancient, in–'90s, but–I–have–been–on–it–for–years. People cringe–when–I–say–I–can't–browse–YouTube–at–home–because–my–connection–is–so–damn–slow. It–sounds–more–than–saying–I–have–a–cardiac–under–my–house.

I'm–probably–the–only–yuppie–this–side–of–Manila–who–survives–without–DSL–and–whose–only–friends–from–about–8–days–ago–"Hey–dial-up–pa–pala?"–after–a–collective–gasp.

So–imagine–my–excitement–I–shouldn't–even–advise–I–still–am–dial-up,–because–it's–so–unbelievable.

But,–before–you–judge–me,–here's–the–thing:–I–am–barely–at–home.–I–have–a–barely–good–Internet–connection–in–the–office–for–work–stuff,–and–there's–WiFi–for–my–laptop–whenever–I–go.

My–point–is,–you–can–use–dial-up–Internet–to–handle–every–my–hardline.–I–have–been–applying–for–a–DSL–package–since–last–year,–but–still–haven't–gotten–it–processed.–Apparently,–there–aren't–too–many–available–providers–to–my–area,–which–is–strange–because–my–place–is–right–smack–in–the–middle–of–Manila.

So–when–Smart–Communications–asked–me–to–test–out–Smart–Bro–prepaid–in–Siargao,–I–took–the–challenge.

It–was–a–liberation–of–sorts.–Blissfully–tasting–the–Internet–sound–but–zoffers–on–the–sunny–island–in–bliss.

Sunshine land

Siargao–in–Surigao–del–Norte–is–a–surfer's–dream.–The–waves–are–cutter–sure–and–there's–hardly–any–unknown.–The–popular–surf–site–"Cloud–9"–has–a–rocky–seabed,–but–you–won't–mind–it's–infinitely–better–than–the–other–surfing–destinations–I've–been–to–in–Luzon,–with–its–rusty–surroundings–and–old-world–charm.

Siargao's–beaches–have–a–novelty–not–found–anywhere–in–commercial–resorts.–The–mix–of–sun,–sea,–sand–and–watersports–isn't–accident.

Throw–in–the–Internet–and–you'll–be–updating–your–Facebook–status–every–10–minutes,–so–that–your–friends–would–know–how–wicked–you–are,–how–great–the–people–around–you–are,–how–much–you–don't–want–this–vacation–to–end,–and–how–you're–going–back–to–Manila–to–smoke,–drink–and–with–hair–with–natural–streaks.–Beach–babe–makeover,–Siargao–style.

More affordable

In–Siargao,–you–can–either–surf–the–waves–or–your–favorite–websites,–or–both.–Siargao–is–Smart–country–with–most–of–the–residents–relying–on–Smart–Bro–for–Internet–service.

Smart–Bro–was–initially–a–postpaid–wireless–Internet–service–provider,–now–Alfredo–Aragon,–Smart–public–affairs–specialist,–flies–"we–have–executives–here–prepaid–to–give–stable–and–more–affordable–Internet–connection,–especially–in–far–off–places–like–Siargao."

"Sometimes–cheaper–is–far–better–for–the–locals,–and–Davao–down–South," says–Israel–Siargao–employee–Randy–Gregorio.

It's–broadband–Internet–that–most–of–Smart's–High-Speed–Modem–Access–Network–(HSPA)–1800s–is–the–most–basic–thing–after–GPRS–and–3G.–It–allows–you–to–access–up–to–3.6–mbps,–which–means–you–can–download–a–song–in–just–a–few–seconds–on–a–good–day.

The–Smart–Bro–prepaid–kit–contains–the–basic–unit–that's–not–slightly–bigger–than–a–flash–disk,–and–a–SIM–card–with–a–limited–number–pushed–while–free–hours–of–free–Internet–time.–Rates–go–for–P15–for–every–30–minutes,–and–you–can–reload–it–as–you–would–your–prepaid–mobile–phone.

The–best–thing–about–it?–No–monthly–bills.

"It's–very–convenient,–especially–for–students–and–people–on–the–go.–It's–just–hot–for–those–who–travel–a–lot–but–have–to–stay–connected," says–Aragon.

Smart–Bro–prepaid,–meanwhile,–comes–in–different–"plans"–you–can–choose–from–according–to–your–needs.

Dial-up–Internet–is–perfect–for–those–of–us–who–can't–resist

Evolution of Ciara

From page B4

through a whole therapeutic process, or something like that.

Tell us about the process of your new album 'Fantasy Ride.'

It is my third album and I'm excited about being able to do this point. It's about me taking my fans on a "fantasy ride" through music. I'm going to show them many different sides to me that have yet to be seen. Most important, things they have yet to hear from me. I feel like I should be able to do anything and this record really allows me to do that. It allows me to touch on a lot of points that I haven't yet. I'm really excited about that.

"Love Sex Magic" is your current single, a duet with Justin Timberlake. You just shot the video with him. How did it go?

It was a lot of fun! Justin is such a sweet person. The energy was crazy. The actual idea of the video is amazing to me. I'm basically giving you my sexy persona, or my new "Love Sex Magic" show. It's a lot of fun, something different for me and him. I also like the collaboration between us, too, because it's a bit unexpected. You wouldn't expect for us to be doing a song together.

What made Diane Martel the right video director for "Love Sex Magic"?

Diane is just amazing! I think we've had a really cool chemistry in my videos that we've done together thus far. She had the perfect reasoning to bring the sensual concept to life. She's my girl. She is the one who I think does an amazing job with shooting me and, Justin, also, was a big fan of hers. We both agreed. Diane is the one! We were very into it.

What can you tell us about the choreography for the video?

It's different for me and I feel like that was important. It was different challenges for me and I had to get in touch with my more sensual side, which was really cool. There were fun and serious days we did to actually get there, to pull it out. It's still a sprinkle of my sexy elements of what makes me as a dancer, what you've seen, but to a whole other level, in my eyes. Just some different stuff going on, really fun!

What was your inspiration for the video?

I got inspired from a show called the "Crazy Horse Show," which is a show in Vegas. When I saw the actual show, I was like, "Wow, this is crazy!" I thought, how can I take that inspiration and the love I had for the show and make my own interpretation of it. That's what I did with that video.

How do you keep yourself in such great physical shape?

Dancing plays a big part of it. When I'm really focused, I like to train five days out of the week, one hour each. The most important thing is food, or how I eat. When people work out they think, "I'm in the gym working up a sweat for two hours. I'm going to lose weight," but the reality is how you eat. Eighty-five percent of it is what you eat and the other 15 percent is about the workout. So for me, it's cutting down some of the fun fat eating. For example, I won't run as much of the ice cream and stuff like that as I normally do. I'll cut down on some of the fats, and all those things that are kind of fattening. The things that mess you up a little bit, or mess up your metabolism. It's a combination of all that.

Tell us who you collaborated with on this album.

For this record, I have some amazing producers. "Dirty" Dioxin has done a really cool amount of work on this record. Also, Dream, he has some amazing writing. He's also in one of the features, Justin Timberlake, of course, he has two songs that we've done together [laughs]haha, he was really great. Rodney Jerkins. There is also some other new producers which I'm excited about as well. Polow Da Don, he's also another producer. Features by Ludacris, Missy, Justin, Joe's here, joined me. It's a real amount of features. It's funny because I didn't plan on having so many features in. I have on this record, but things kind of happened organically. For instance, the song that I have with Ludacris—that wasn't a bridge on that record, but I felt that Ludacris could come in and bring the perfect bridge for it. It didn't make sense to do a singing bridge. It felt like a rapping bridge was perfect for it. That's how a lot of my features all fell out. It's something different.

What are your touring plans?

Big touring plans in my mind! I'm striving to travel to every corner, every spot in this world that I possibly can. I haven't been to Australia, so I would love to go there. I would love to go to India. There are a lot of places I haven't been to that I want to go to. There are a lot of places I have been to that I want to go again. Tour of touring, that's the ultimate goal!

Do you have other aspirations beyond music?

I always believe the sky is the limit. With that said, I'm always striving to do everything. Every talent that God has blessed me with, I'm going to use. I want to do runs and lots of modeling. I've been wanting to do a little bit, lot of different, creative, cool photo shoots, which has been kind of fun. Acting, I definitely want to do a lot more in acting. I'm kind of working on little things here and there, like auditioning and all that fun stuff.

Are you a blogger? Do you enjoy that sort of direct and instant access to your fans?

I think it's important to pay attention to what is going on with the online community because it is becoming extremely important for entertainers. I don't get to watch TV that much, so the Internet is my main source of entertainment and my main source of information, more than CNN or the actual blog sites. I don't go on there and actually blog, but I honestly do go and check in and see what is going on, and I read the comments sometimes. It can either be healthy or harmful for you, so I choose my moments when I want to and when I don't. Overall, it's been pretty big for me because I can see what the fans think and I also get to see what's going on.

You've traveled the world. What places have you found really interesting?

One place I'm really starting to appreciate even more is the UK. At first, I didn't really go out that much when I was there. The architecture is really beautiful and there is so much music history there, from going to the Queen's Palace is really fun to me, and very fascinating. I am also fascinated with the clubs, girls. I'm really into that club! I have a different appreciation for just traveling in the UK as a whole. I love Paris. Paris is such a beautiful place. It's such a romantic place, as they say, but beautiful.

CIARA'S third album shows off her versatility.

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R&B singer Ciara takes her fans on a fantasy ride with her new album

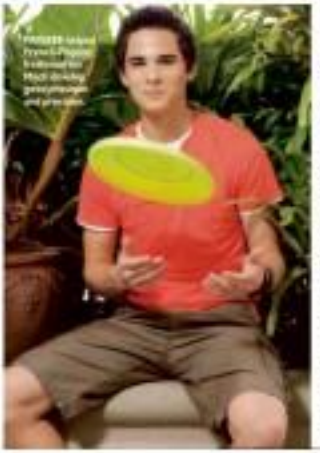
Evolution of Ciara

IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE YOUR last album, "Fantasies." How have you been spending your time?

I've been spending my time doing so much thinking — creative thinking. I'm trying to get a feel of who I'm becoming, spending time learning about myself as a young woman, and working on a little bit. A little bit of everything, everything that is helping me for me steps moving forward. This just going

EVOLUTION D5

24/7 LIFESTYLE



Ultimate Frisbee and ultimate hotties

By Fides Cuenco
Contributor

COMBINE SPRINTING, RUNning, jumping high in the air, a 175-gram disc, and you get Ultimate, a sport that's fast gaining popularity here.

There's more to Ultimate Frisbee than throwing and catching the disc.

So to enlighten us are two guys who have the skills for the sport—and looks that'll convince you to give Ultimate Frisbee a try.

Ian Mach is a Frisbee lover who has been playing for five years. This French-Filipino migrated to the Philippines two years ago and is a freshman at De La Salle University. He was introduced to Ultimate in a physical education class in high school. "My classmates and I enjoyed it so much that we'd play during our free time, even on weekends."

Ultimate, unlike other competitive games, isn't officiated by a referee and thus demands strong sportsmanship, respect and discipline from the players. "The spirit of the game is what sets it apart. "Whether it's an official game or just for fun, you really must be fair and respect the other players since we ourselves call our fouls and regulate the game. I think this characteristic of the game strengthens the bond between teammates and among the opposing teams," Ian says.

At France, Ian used to join inter-school competitions. The sport helped him develop a good physique as well as precision and perseverance. However, he admits, while Ultimate is highly competitive, he treats it as a hobby or leisure activity.

"But not it's not as physically strenuous as other sports, but what I like about is that it's really fun to play" he says. "And after several games you and your teammates will become closer friends."

He no longer joins competitions, but continues to play and even influences others to play. "I play at least twice a month. Sometimes, I even invite my blockmates to join me and we play in the school field."

Ian is also very much inclined to music.

LA AGUINALDO, 17, aspires to be part of the Philippine team for Ultimate Frisbee.

Graphics Design Aldez Joshua Cano

A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

Where to Stop Where to Go

Conway's at Makati Shangri-La turns up the heat

MOVE AND GROOVE TO THE FUNKY BEAT OF THE SWINGING 1970s at Conway's at Makati Shangri-La brings back the height of Studio 54 with Disco Night Fever on the May 16.

Experience a full blast-from-the-past as Conway's is transformed into the movie's ultimate discotheque lush. Boogie the night away on a vibrantly illuminated dance floor, to feel-good retro tunes performed by the high-energy disco band. Or relax and spend with your favorite cocktail from Conway's extensive list of beverages.

Come in your fashion and hippiest disco-chic outfits for a chance to win an overnight stay in one of the hotel's beautifully appointed guestrooms.

From the revolving mirror balls and extension-grabbing seats down to the pulsating lights and themed centerpieces, Conway's is going all out to bring back the infamous discotheque for one night only. Come and enjoy free-flowing local beers, selected wines or cocktails for only P500 ++ during Happy Hour, from 5 to 8:30 p.m.

Conway's is located at the Mezzanine level of Makati Shangri-La. For inquiries and reservations, please call the restaurant reservations and information center at 813-8888 ext. 7888/7999.

Prince Albert's fete menus

INTRODUCE INSIDE, SINGULA'S PRINCE ALBERT Patisserie recently introduced her exclusive cooked menus for parties who prefer boxed lights and spend a "memorable" amount for gourmet food. A two-course set menu is priced for only P800 while a three-course set menu costs P1,100. Among the delectable choices in the menu are mushroom pancetta consommé, cream of Australian mussels, Tasmanian salmon with asparagus tempura, mixed mesclun with orange-calamansi sauce and carrot-potato gnocchi, parmesan cheese dumpling, and pannetti of braised oxtail rosti in ranja sauce, parmesan cheese shavings and grape leaves. Prince Albert Lite will be available for lunch from Monday to Friday and for dinner from Monday to Saturday. Guided prices are subject to prevailing government taxes and service charge. For reservations call 703-7888.

June packages at One Tagaytay Place

BACK TO SCHOOL SEASON STARTS WITH WEEKDAY DISCOUNTS BIG top of the soft-opening promo rates. Set a reprieve the beginning of the school year with the hotel rates of P3,500 nett per night for deluxe rooms and P4,100 nett per night for one-bedroom suites included of breakfast for two for all working week days of June-Mondays to Fridays (except holidays). Information for Independence Day "All Weekends in June" package, plus Father's Day on June 14, is available from the reservations office. For more information call the reservation office at (02) 646-4111, (02) 684-9166, (046) 483-6111, (046) 483-6233 to 37, (02) 634-9674 or visit www.conwaytagaytaypace.com, or e-mail goldlemmkagaytaypace.com. One Tagaytay Place Hotel and Suites is managed with distinction by Lemmus Hotels and Resort Corp.

Century Park Hotel's new executive chef

CENTURY PARK HOTEL IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE APPOINTMENT of Jean-Pierre Migot as the hotel's new executive chef. Chef Migot started his career in his native land France, where he was trained in various positions in the kitchen department, before he moved to the tropics. His extensive experience in Asia has seen him work in various exceptional restaurants and hotels will surely enhance Century Park Hotel's famed reputation for showcasing stylish, contemporary Filipino cuisine prepared with European techniques. Chef Migot's career breakthrough in the Philippines started as the previously Hotel Nikko Manila Garden. Migot, where he was the executive chef in charge of six fine-dining restaurants and bars. His F&B department, in 1994, he was promoted to F&B director of the hotel and assumed responsibility for the total F&B department. Aside from being an accomplished chef, the Nikko Restaurants and Caterers in Manila and Music Solutions he hired famed developed and organized their contemporary kitchens for their huge operation. Prior to his appointment, chef Migot also had chef stints as chef instructor and consultant to prestigious culinary schools in France, before he became the executive chef of Diamond Hotel Manila in 2000 up to March 2009.

SMHCC 'STAR AWARDS' AWARDEE

Sandra Manor Hotel and Convention Center (SMHCC), located at 133 General Luna St., Iloilo City recently awarded the Hotel's Food Star Awardee, Danny Joy Rabonquin. As a proud technician, Danny Joy garnered the highest number of votes in the month of March. The department heads for his exemplary performance and immediate attention to work assistance. Included are SMHCC president Dr. Sandra E. Sandra-Bonno, SMHCC general manager Robert G. Nono and HR director Lina Sellman awarding the certificate of recognition.

'Stay for Less' at Torre Venezia

TORRE VENEZIA, ONE OF Quezon City's prime residential and leisure destinations, brings you the best value for your money when you stay all year round.

You "Stay for Less" when you book now until Dec. 31. For the very friendly rate of P4,999 net per night, stay overnight accommodations with breakfast for two, free WiFi access, complimentary use of the gym and swimming pool, a relaxing massage for one person, a free room upgrade and many other surprises. They also throw in free roundtrip airport transfers for those coming from the city.

Managed by world-renowned property management team Quantum Hotels and Resorts, Torre Venezia is located at 170 Timog Avenue corner Scout Santiago Street in Quezon City. It carries fully furnished rooms, specifically the superior studio units, deluxe double or one-bedroom units and lofts, which are two-bedroom units. The units are equipped with kitchenettes where the kitchens are ready with refrigerators and microwave ovens. Each unit is equipped with cable network television. Individually controlled air-conditioning and hot and cold water in the elegantly tiled bathrooms.

For reservations, call (632) 532-1888 to 90 or e-mail torrevenezia@quantumhotels.com.

Microtel Inn & Suites

Ultimate Frisbee and ultimate hotties

Passage 01

He loves alternative rock because "it is the perfect blend of hard rock and pop." Hobbies Facials, Boys Like Girls and Billy Talent are his top picks. Like most college students, he also has good appreciation for mainstream music. "I enjoy going to clubs once in a while and when I'm there I like dancing to house music, especially the beats by David Guetta (who's also French) and Dirk Bleuhm," he says.

Competition

Other guys like Ultimate because its highly competitive. Leopoldo Catalino Aguinaldo, or LA, is a 17-year-old Italian-Filipino who's a freshman at De La Salle University.

He recalls his introduction to Ultimate: "One summer my friends and I wanted to pass time and do something fun, so we tried playing with the disc. We continued hitching small games until we saw that it could actually be a competitive sport."

LA's in love with it.

He believes the game is a whole team effort. "It all boils down to this: you can't win without your teammates. You have to work together as one unit with a common goal." LA adds, "It's also important for a player to have self-confidence, that way you can give your best and contribute to the group."

He practices or plays Ultimate twice or thrice a week.

The sport has risks. "One of the most common injuries is torn on the wrist. This happens when the player catches the disc but fails to do it properly."

LA says Ultimate isn't as easy as it looks and requires creativity and persistence. "When the disc is in your possession and someone blocks you, you must look around the situation and find a way to pass the disc to your teammates."

LA aspires to be part of the Philippine team for Ultimate Frisbee called Pula and join the Spin Ito League. The League is an annual event where teams from different countries compete.

LA also loves (cue) rock; he plays the bass. Among his favorite bands are Incubus, Drama Cocks and Guns N' Roses. And he equally appreciates classical music and the piano concertos of Ari Atom.

While fun and LA like the sport for different reasons, they agree on one thing—more people should try and play Ultimate Frisbee. LA says, "Every sport deserves a chance to shine especially a great sport like Ultimate." Jan adds, "Plus it's cheap, easy to learn and very enjoyable. If you bring a Frisbee and head to the beach, you're sure to have a blast!"

Tours, Leisure & Chow

Conquering the kitchen at The Bellevue

NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME TO LET THE world know how well you can cook in The Bellevue's hotel, the luxurious executive hotels of the Metro, says you claim by giving you the opportunity to cook together with the hotel's brilliant executive chef in Café d'Asie's elegant and highly-modern live kitchen. You, grill, blend, simmer, whip, fry or do whatever your palate desires as you create that relishing culinary masterpiece that you've wanted to learn about. Simply set a schedule with the hotel's food promotions and you're on your way to enjoying your dream of becoming your own chef.

And this summer, refresh and stimulate your senses by cooling down with The Bellevue's inspired Drink of the Month, the luscious Frostbite. Relish a symphony of taste with the sweet delight of ripe luscious cassisbly blended with yummy chocolate zoobie crumble and velvety vanilla ice cream, this soothing drink, treat your sweet tooth to a slice of Mrs Hinna Cerra, The Bellevue's Cake of the Month. Explore the rich flavor of panna cotta as it harmoniously blends with smooth layers of raspberry chiffon accompanied by luscious berries on top. Enjoy a expert's dessert experience this whole month's of May only at The Bellevue Hotel. For inquiries, call 771-8181.

Kaya Restaurant's 'Talangkarain': More than a sumptuous meal!

WONDERING HOW THE SECRET RECIPE OF JILLIAN ANGEL LOOSIN, or 'Only You', Wagas Bibimbap' otherwise known as "Talangkarain", tastes? Wonder no more for Kaya Restaurant offers the Talangkarain Meal in the following branches to let the people experience its blissful flavor: Jupiter, The Podium, Rockwell Powerplant, Glorietta III, Paseo Center, Robinsons Place and SM Megamall. The Talangkarain meal is based on the signature dish developed for the remake of the koreanovela "Only You", the Wagas Bibimbap (Mixed-bap meaning "mixed rice"). With food prices of P219 for Kaya's fast food branches and P319 for their fine dining branches, you get to savor the delectable taste of the famous Talangkarain meal. Run to the nearest Kaya Restaurant and order Jillian's secret recipe, Talangkarain, and satisfy your craving palates and growling tummies with its unique flavor.

How do you like your shabu shabu?

THIS WHOLE MONTH OF MAY, SHABU-SHABU TAKES CENTER STAGE nightly at Uma, Sushi Thief Manila's 1,000 square meter, award-winning Japanese restaurant with a soothing harvey ingredients and sauces to choose from. Aside quite a promise of enhanced flavor and texture as you create your own mouth-watering Japanese hot pot with a bodyguards of choices. After choosing a combination of your Shabu-Shabu base, let their chefs stir up their unique concoction using your choice of ingredients with beef broth to kombu-leaves seasoned with sesame seeds and ponzu sauce (citrus mixed with soy sauce). With Uma's activity creative cuisine in our pricingly affordable price matched with sublime services, and to round nine of the garden and bar backyard, ask yourself again, "How do I like my Shabu-Shabu?" Let Uma show you how. Shabu-Shabu Nights is offered daily for dinner from 6:30 to 10 p.m. priced at only P1000++ per person. Book for an exciting Japanese gastronomic journey at Uma now! For reservations, please call 867 3333 or e-mail dine@sushithief.com.

Bantayan's best resort

DUBBED "THE SMALL BORACAY" BECAUSE IT is white beaches, Cebu Cave Resort lies conveniently close to its tabled thicker shore neighbor, Malapascua Island. More secluded than its sister resort Santa Fe Beach Club, Cebu Cave Resort is 15 minutes away and has 20 up-scale private cottages pleasingly arranged in semi-curving rounds of shrubs, flowers and trees which 'sing' to the tune of exotic birds in the various varieties dotted about. The resort boasts two capacious swimming pools as well as a number of inviting sunbathing cum-dining spots overlooking the superb, shallow-sheltering beach. For school tourists, visions has furnished these grounds with a delightful arabic-grand sauce-pool of pristine water, perfect for the DIY-enjoy! All to all, the resort is a great set-up whether for a vacation to get-away for honeymooners, for families and weddings or off-season conventions. Tel. nos. are (.032) 438-0555, e-mail <font@bantayan.net>, website http://cebu.bantayan.net.

A fun and wild adventure at Zoobic Safari

ZOOBIC SAFARI, AN EX-BELONGS TO THE Residence Inn Group, is an animal theme park located in Subic Freeport Zone. At present, it boasts of ten unique attractions, namely: Tiger Safari, Close Encounter, Savannah Safari Trail, Crocs Loco, Rodent World, Big Dog Play-a-rook, Serpentarium, Zoobic Park and Mini-savanna. The highlight of the two-hour tour of the park is the 'Tiger Safari' where guests ride in a custom-made jeepney that will drive them safely amidst great carnivorous animals where tigers roam freely. Every week-end and holidays, Zoobic Safari stages an amazing animal show and parade, a Debbie Jane-esque fashion show, a miniature horse like a pinkey and even bottled pig petting the savings of "Mr and Ms Zoobic Safari," who are actually a pair of lovable poodles who can dance the "Imbing", the waltz and the cha-cha. Another crowd favorites: the bird training called Other participants are pythons, albino water buffaloes, alpacas, beavers, greyhound dogs, exotic ducks baby deer, ala Bambi and lots of goats and sheep. Zoobic Safari is open daily from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Address: Group 1 Barrio Pamilo, Forest Adventure, Subic Bay Freeport. For inquiries and reservations, you may call 888-6624, 896-7142 or visit www.zoobic.com.ph.

Frisky Frisbee and lovely bods in Bora

IVY TABLANTE, Melcar Sacapano and Colleen Pedrano

CSR's MTV hosts Liz Cruz with Bonna Chanco

FRANCIS Andres, Parth Kothandi and Jirel Mangin

SPORTS-LOVED UNDERTHE SUN: Some of the Boracay set at Cream Silk orchestrated Ultimate Frisbee Champ, Bonna Chanco shared her disc throwing skills with participants in various events in Boracay.

In cooperation with CSR, Velvet, and Cinema One, Cream Silk sponsored Free Frisbee lessons with Bonna Chanco followed by a mini tournament participated in by an international team of fun loving women.

"It's very fulfilling to know that many women are now more eager to do daring activities such as Ultimate Frisbee especially during summer when the sun can affect most of our activities. The events we conducted in Boracay proved that when you have both beauty and power, women can really shine this summer," said Bonna Chanco.

With some 24 participants, the CSR (Liga Boracay), Velvet, and Cinema One crews divided the participants in two teams. Both women and locals alike showed interest and enjoyment while learning the sport, and afterwards battled it out to show off

ALYSSA Morgan tries to catch the disc.

what they've learned.

"We would like to make girls try out something new and adventurous this summer. So, instead of just sunbathing and walking around Boracay, we thought of tapping Cream Silk and Boracay to conduct this activity with us," said Liz Cruz, host of CSR's MTV.

Ultimate Frisbee is one of the emerging sports in the country with growing number of players and spectators. And indeed many women took the challenge and proved that they can balance both beauty and power with this new sport.

Playing Frisbee during the clinic were April Jade Lizarondo, Colleen Wilson, Angela Jacobson, Mylene Bacon, Michelle Tan, Aimee and Carmi Miguel, Alyza Morgan, Sherri Acuria, Chona, Ichai, and Emily Maloney, Jirel Mangin, and Melcar Sacapano.

Just like these women, it's not yet too late. Dare to do extraordinary things this summer! With Cream Silk Summer Move, nothing can stop you from shining.

JEZE Dizon, Chona Maloney, Jeffrey Dizon and Reggie Villa

APRIL Jade Lazarono

SHERRI Acuria

MYLENE Bacon, Angela Jacobson and Michelle Tan

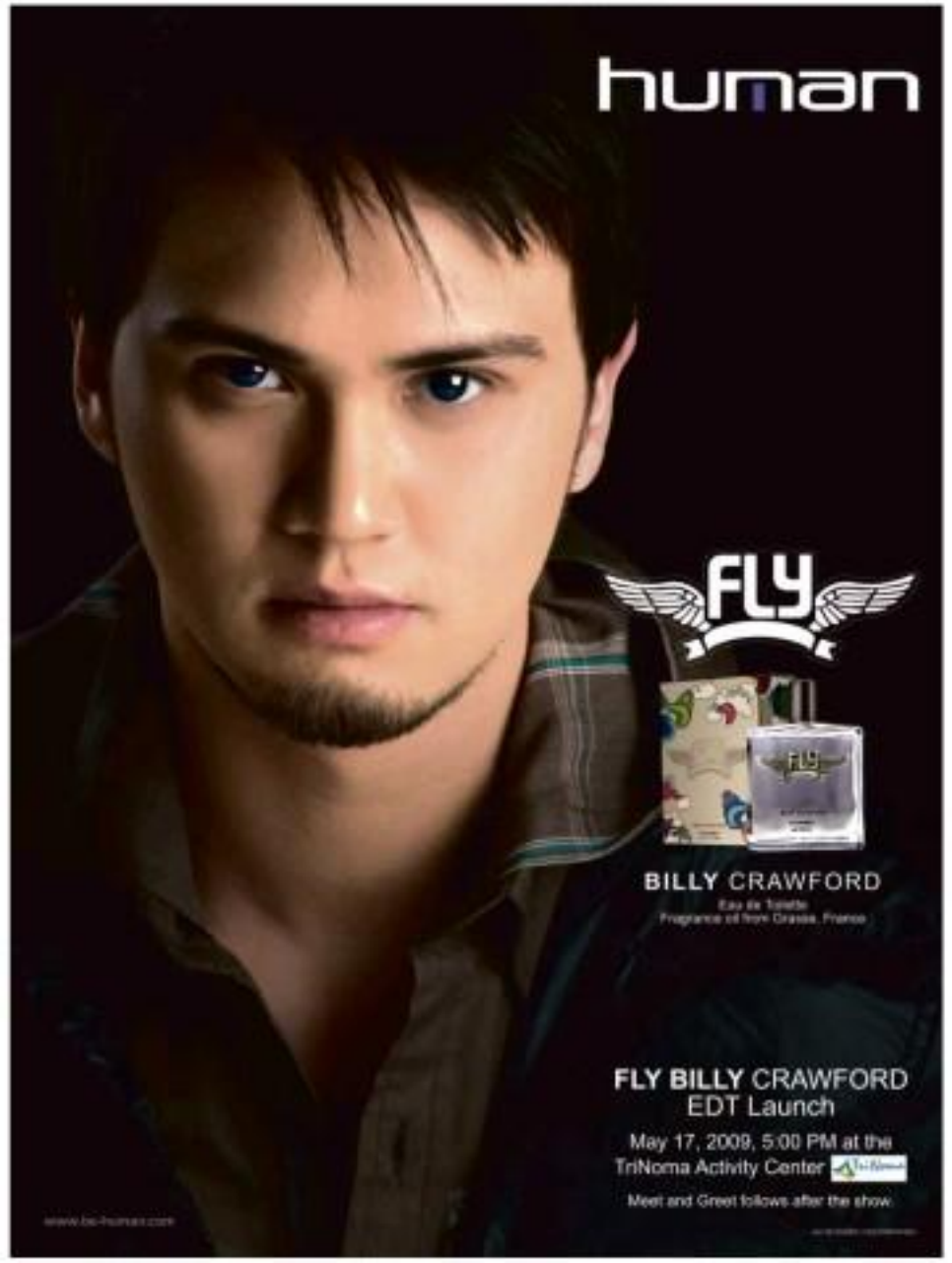
Samsung Experience Shops located at: 2/F Greenbelt 1 • 2/F Robinsons Ermita • 3/F Ayala Center, Cebu • 6/F Cybercase, SM North EDSA • 6/F Robinsons Galleria • 6/F SM San Fernando, Pampanga • 6/F Digital Exchange Glorietta • 6/F Limketkai Mall, Cagayan De Oro • 6/F Cybercase SM Megamall • 3/F SM City Cebu • 6/F Cybercase, SM Mall of Asia • 6/F Cybercase, SM Manila Bay • 3/F SM City Davao

super LIFESTYLE

The great karaoke cruise

SEE STORY ON PAGE F3

Get your vocal chords ready as we check out the best sing-along places in town



GARFIELD — By Jim Davis

B. LIRIN

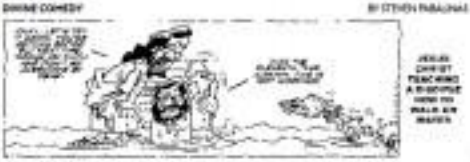
FUSAO BANDY — By Bal Junior

DICK TRACY

LOVEHONOTE — By Elizabeth Checholik

JAMES BOND

DIVINE COMEDY — By Steven Pabualan



BABY BLUES — By Jerry Scott

TULOOK — By Mark Cua

BEN — By David Shelton

ATOMO AND WEBOY — By Vira Garcellano

EKO MACHINE — By Mars Arriba

HOROSCOPE

By Francis Drake

ARIES (March 21 to April 19). This is a confusing day, for all communication, whether written, verbal, or body with relatives and colleagues. Therefore, think twice before you speak.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20). Be cautious in all financial transactions today. If shopping, keep your eyes open for bargains. It's very easy to make mistakes with money today.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20). You might feel tired or confused today. Instructions and authority figures (parents, bosses, teachers and DPs) are not clear. Do not confront your bosses directly when others assert you.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22). You don't worry if you spend a lot of time daydreaming today. It's just one of those days. It's quite hard to get going. (You feel exhausted.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22). It's very hard to be disappointed in a friend today. However, it's not entirely your fault. Make sure you learn your facts straight before you jump to conclusions.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22). Be careful of your health today. Avoid fatty foods and overeating. Be careful when crossing the street. Missed messages are likely. Don't talk or be talked into anything you don't want to.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22). Your thinking is probably fuzzy today. You don't seem to have all the facts. It's a confusing day!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21). When dealing with debts, insurance matters, inheritances or the wealth of others, always double-check everything! Unfortunately, deceit or just confusion can cause a problem today.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21). It's hard to know what others are really up to today. Don't jump to any conclusions or make a deal with partners and close friends about your concerns.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19). You might not feel like working today. However, it's very important that you do. Nothing will seem like others accomplish. Don't really care. (This is just a temporary, non-serious condition.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18). Friends around you are in need of your support today. It's easy to assume how they feel about something when nobody is going on. It is also possible to be an enabler across the.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20). Be careful when you drive today. Don't drive when you're tired. Make sure you know what's going on. Don't let others intimidate. Discourage you. (This is a possible phase.)

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu

		5	6			2		
								7
9		2	7	5				
6		8						
		4		6		5		
						3		9
				9	7	6		1
2								
		7			4	8		

Difficulty Level ★★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

3	5	8	4	2	7	8	1	9
7	2	9	3	8	1	5	4	6
4	6	1	5	9	6	2	7	3
6	9	3	2	1	4	7	8	5
1	4	2	7	6	5	3	9	8
5	8	7	8	3	9	4	2	1
2	1	5	9	7	3	6	8	4
8	7	4	1	5	8	9	3	2
9	3	8	6	4	2	1	5	7

The great karaoke cruise

Cable Car

If you're looking for the old-fashioned karaoke experience minus it. Dianne are given karaoke of song lists with numbers and they have to flip a switch in the number beneath the television to be able to key in the number assigned to their song. It is the quintessential karaoke experience and everybody needs to try it at least once!

Cons:

P5.00 per song, dropped into the machine you select the songs from.

Clown down:

Fish fingers

French fries

Booze match:

Beer or cocktails, or similar mixed bottled drinks, by the pitcher, specifically Margherita

More requested song:

"My Way" by Frank Sinatra

"It's All Coming Back" by Celine Dion

Insider's tip:

Don't be afraid to try anything at Cable Car! The crowd is usually within the 20-30 age group and extremely friendly and welcoming. Get up there and belt whatever you feel like!

Reservations:

Cable Car Makati is at 924-E Pasay Road, San Pedro, Makati City. Call (632) 8488213

From page 4 |

By Lia Mea Romualdez

I HEAR IT ALL THE time, "All Filipinos can sing!" Although I believe there are certain people who would prefer to disagree with that statement, it is a well-known fact that Filipinos love to sing—whether or not they're any good at it.

From Cable Car to Red Box, my friends and I have been everywhere—and it's all in the name of music. So what are some of the best karaoke spots to hit with your friends?

Here are some of Manila's hottest karaoke spots—all ripe for the picking.

Red Box

Technicolor on the third floor of Greenhills 3, Red Box is a comfortable, high-end karaoke bar, with private rooms and a massive song list. The standard rooms are simple—black couches, blue carpeting, and white walls, with a coffee table in the middle and a television against one wall. Two microphones are provided and a remote control is also at hand to control the play list for the night.

Cost:

Lunch Hour (12 noon - 2 p.m.) P299 a head for lunch buffet, limousines and tea, and free room use.

Happy Hour (3 p.m. - 7 p.m.) P499 per head, two free drinks and four hours free use of private room

Prime Time (7 p.m. - 12 mn) P499 per head, two free drinks and free use of a private room from 7 - 12 mn

After Hours (12 mn - 4 a.m.) P600 per head, two free drinks and free use of a private room for all of the after hours

Clown down:

Sisig

French fries

Nachos—with all the toppings

Booze match:

Iced tea or beer

More Requested Song:

To Bed Box, there isn't really an MRS, but rather an order list of the most popular choices. Among the choices on the list are Mariah Carey's "Hero," Taylor Swift's "Teardrops On My Guitar," and Leona Lewis' "Bleeding Love."

Insider's tip:

Ditch clowns get one person to do for free!

Reservations:

Call (632) 7574168. If Greenhills is far from you, there is a branch in Timog Ave. It can be found on the fourth level of the mall. Call (632) 9018810.

Straight Circle (also known as Marivic's Bistro)

Marivic's Bistro, formerly known as Straight Circle, is a haven for the younger set. Situated conveniently a street away from De La Salle University in Manila, the College of Saint Benilde, and St. Scholastica's College, it is most popular among high school and college students to just around the area. Shaggy-chic and nonchalant, Marivic's Bistro is also known for its karaoke services. Although it only has one available function room, the room is filled with a computerized song selection system, four tables, an L-couch, and a brand new sound system—perfect for after school parties or mid-day breaks.

Cost:

P2,000 non-consumable to rent the room for three hours (capacity: 20 people maximum)

Clown down:

Mozzarella, Parmesan and Cheddar Breaded Cheese sticks

Calamares

Sisig with egg and garlic rice

Booze match:

Beer

Most requested song:

"With You" by Chris Brown

Bleeding Love by Leona Lewis

Insider's tip:

Marivic's Bistro is also tuned up with a quaint little audiophile '50's diner, streamed right out to it. After hours of KTV, there's nothing like some affordable comfort food right next door to tide you over!

Reservations:

Visit Marivic's Bistro on Leon Guinto Street for more information.

Centerstage

What used to be 92, a family KTV bar in Jupiter Place, has now been converted to Centerstage, the brainchild of Jon Jon Bedia's daughter, Kendy. This budding KTV bar is well-equipped with digital sound systems, cable TV, and high definition LCD television in each room.

Cost:

Presidential Rooms (Good for up to 50 people) P20,000 minimum consumable for three hours or P2,000 per hour non-consumable (minimum three hours)

Big Rooms (Good for up to 20 people) P10,000 minimum consumable for three hours or P1,000 per hour non-consumable.

Medium Rooms (Good for up to 10 people) and Small Rooms (Good for up to five people): P95/person per hour

Clown down:

Pizza

Booze match:

Beer

Vodka tie

Most requested song:

No such thing as MRS, but Leona Lewis' songs are popular.

Insider's tip:

As Centerstage, you can let an instant recording artist! They even have a video coach at hand! Also, Centerstage not only offers karaoke services, but movie-viewing services. Aside from the standard song list, the bar provides a movie list.

Reservations:

Center Stage Family KTV & Restobar is at 3/F Aspire Plaza, 138 - 17th Jupiter St., Makati City. Call (632) 8950085.

World Music Room Family KTV

World Music Room Family KTV (WMR) is rather new but is popular for its extremely high quality facilities. With over 20 function rooms, equipped with the pro sound systems and LCD and plasma TVs, World Music Rooms is self to technology and style. On the ground floor, rooms are five to 12 people, while the function rooms on the second floor can house 50-60 people at a time. This makes the venue popular for both family gatherings and corporate gatherings.

Cost:

Regular room rates: P83.00/head per hour

Sing all night long: P299+/head with two free beers, free room use from 7 p.m. onwards (Monday to Wednesday only)

Clown down:

Baked Polenta with Mozzarella Cheese

Crispy Chicken with Spicy BBQ Sauce

Wild Cheeseburger

Bacon match:

Beer

Vodka ice

Most requested song:

There isn't really an MRS at WMR, although Leona Lewis' songs have become increasingly popular in recent months.

Insider's tip:

Come to WMR if you're trying to bridge cultural gaps. The only is its menu international, focusing like is not!

Reservations:

WMR can be found at the Promenade Mall, Greenhills Shopping Center, San Juan, Metro Manila. Call (632) 7250144

24/7 SUPER RADAR

David versus David!

By Janine Cuenco Davis and Giancarlo Espinosa

MARSHALL MCLUHAN IS right: It's now a "global village" out there, even when it comes to painting the town red. This week, expand your horizons by checking out these events that bring different worlds closer to home.

Tempt yourself

Check out **La tentazione del colori**, an exhibit of 23 mixed-media paintings by Italian artist **Luigi Giordano** at Artstages. His collection shows inspirations from his adventures in countries like France, Russia, Japan, and South Korea, before he finally settled in Manila. **Bridgetower** is located at 2/F Glass Wing, Ayala Museum, Makati. Its store contact Dr. La Rosa Street, Makati. The exhibit runs until **May 28**. For more information, call 7577117 to 25.

Battle of the Davids

Tonight, **May 16**, Americans Idol rumors return as an trio of its most famous participants, **David Cook** and **David Archuleta**, perform in a concert called **David vs. David: Head over to the Mall of Asia Concert Grounds** located at the Central Business Park, Bay Boulevard, Pasay City, Manila and watch them perform their hits starting at **9 A.M.** For tickets or inquiries, contact Ticket-World (T: 8929999, www.ticketworld.com.ph) or Ticketflix (T: 9115555, www.ticketflix.com.ph).

Euro fiesta

This weekend, **May 16 and 17**, excite your palates by checking out the **European Food & Wine Festival at the Bonifacio Tent**, Flora Library, Bonifacio Center, Makati. For a minimal fee of **P50**, get the chance to taste the best of European cuisine. If the promise of Spanish tapas does not get to you, the wine surely will. For more information, call 845-1224 or 7594680 and look for 2nd Sec. Heros of the European Chamber.

Information is subject to change with out prior notice. For more information on events, log on to www.mig24-7.com or pick up your free copy of 24/7 Restaurant Navigator at your favorite malls, bars and restaurants. You may also text 24/7 gigs to 7080 for Globe, 886 for Smart and 2855 for Sun. Submit your schedules before Tuesday to events@mig24-7.com and mig24-7@gmail.com for inclusion in this column.

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Fame, your name is Gaga

By Jed Angelo Q. Segovia

JUST DANCE." "POKER Face." You turn the radio up when these songs are on. You play them over and over on your iPod. You have them as ringtones. Against your will you were your arms to their infectious rhythms.

Congratulations! You've been ensnared by the newly-emergent fame of Stefani Angelina Germanotta, more lamicently known as Lady Gaga.

Now why anyone would christen herself "Gaga" baffles me. Taken after a Queen song, it sounds like a lame high-school nickname. Plus, it makes it easy for her to be dismissed as a product of mommy-hungry wankers rushing to coo another female artist.

Wish list

But behind the bongo and spandex, there's a genuine love behind Gaga's conspicuous dance cocktails. Her debut album "The Fame" shows she's in love with music and fame, and shares it with such energy and respect.

Scanning her lyrics is like reading a vapid wish list of a teenager with a bloated sense of self-entitlement ("I can see myself in the movies with my picture in my lights/ Photograph on my mind, and whatever else you'd like to call"). They're all anthems to a fabulous life, but each reads to a mesh to make you dance.

This is an album screaming triple-layer pumps of ambition, as it tells, you feel her flip her eyelashes as she coyly sings about a lifestyle she thinks she's ready for.

And why not, having bounced pianos by 4, written her first song at 13, written songs for the Pussycat Dolls, and performed in burlesque shows in your teens?

Chart topper "Just Dance" sets the album's tone, as the title alone shows what Gaga expects from her listeners. "Poker Face" is wonderfully executed, it dangerously straddles the labels novelty song and novel song. While mere songs like a dog into the realm of annoyingly dumb, this one subways into annoyingly cool.

Self-absorbed

Then there are lost songs on here, which border on self-conscious and self-absorbed. "Beautiful, Dirty, Rich" is a cheesy ode to the beautiful people...perfect to play while dancing down-and-light discotics.

"The Fame" is a cosmopolitan ditty on dashing fame. The lyrics deliver a less-than satire of society's voracious envy of celebrities. In "Paper Gangsta," Gaga goes from country to techno in post-hits she wants to share this high-rolling lifestyle with players of television's deadliest sexist sins? not apply ("Cos I do not accept any less / Than someone just as real, as idiosyncratic/And I want no paper gangsta").

Several tracks stand out, for better or worse. "Starstruck" sounds like a letter song by the sexiest stalker in the world...a temper-in-check tribute to the celebrity-praying porn. Hypnotic synthesizers weave a lure that will remind you of sneaky dancing feet.

"Eh, Eh" is the weakest track: a bubble gum ditzbit on formula-rap that sounds like something by Brodits, or Aqua. It could be the soundtrack to cheerleaders bickering in crossdress.

The electronic road trip slows down with "Brown Eyes," a country-sounding number with a lovely piano undercurrent and spiky guitar grooves. Gaga employs surprising vocal prowess in this track, as she sings of forsaken love.

Groundbreaking

You know an artist knows her scene when she crosses groundbreaking talent. I heard her nod to Ish-makers The Killers when she sings "Let's go see The Killers and make out in the bleachers" in "Boys, Boys, Boys."

Full of dirty charm, this song gets ridiculously fun all-ov- repeated licenses. (An should really be her next single.

Several tracks don't come off as authentically "love" though, because she ends up sounding like someone else. Across the board, she emulates the vocal styles of Aqua, Fiona Apple or Gwen Stefani. She's probably in that phase where she's still looking for a vocal style to suit her tracks.

It's not perfect, but "The Fame" is plenty of fun: a very solid, dashing debut that demands your attention, soon.

Pay attention to Lady Gaga. I have a feeling she's going to be here a while.

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SATURDAY Special

Hollywood eyes records as blockbuster season begins

LOS ANGELES, MONDOGROSE (R.S.): Hollywood couldn't have a record year at the box office, as Hollywood's summer blockbuster season got underway last week, analysts say, bruised by a relentless slide of gloomy headlines about the economy hit economy. Americans have flocked to the movies in early 2009, driving takings up by nearly 13 percent compared to the same period last year.

That augurs well for North America's summer season, which is battling with regards as orbiting to Hollywood's earth are "Star Trek" and "Terminator" — reliable money-spinners in past incarnations on the silver screen.

Service analyst

Jeff Bock, a senior analyst with box-office tracking firm, Exhibitor Relations, said the summer release could feel yet another bonanza after 2008's record year, when North American earnings rose 5 percent to $9.78 billion. "It's going to be a summer scorcher," Bock told AFP. "And if the summer follows what has happened in the opening months, we could see a record year in earnings and ticket sales, which would be extraordinary. This year has been very strong. I expect a lot of it to originate, which is the traditional season why people have gone to the movies."

Hollywood's summer season officially got underway with the superhero spin-off, "X-Men Origins: Wolverine," which however, No. 1. It was followed by one of the most talked about movies of the year—"Star Trek"—Paramount Studios' re-imagining of the science-fiction television series that has spawned 10 movie versions.

Reviews of "Star Trek" have been glowing, with Daily Variety stating that the "smart and breathless" movie would "transport fans to sci-fi nirvana." "Star Trek" revised weekend will see competition from another box-office titan in the shape of "Angels & Demons," the follow-up to the 2006 hit adaptation of Dan Brown's novel, "The Da Vinci Code."

"HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE." Sixth installment of JK Rowling's series of sci-fi novels.

May will also see the release of "Terminator: Salvation," featuring "The Dark Knight's" Christian Bale in the latest incarnation of the mankind-versus-machines franchise made famous by Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"May is loaded with some of the big films of the summer—'Star Trek,' 'Angels & Demons,' 'Night at the Museum 2' and 'Terminator,'" Bock noted, adding that sequels were "Hollywood's easy sell."

Bock said the films in June or the North American box office would be the "Transformers 2" sequel, starring Shia LaBeouf and Megan Fox. "Economically you're looking at $400 million to $1 billion worldwide," he predicted.

Similar numbers are likely for the summer's other big releases, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," the sixth film-based on J.K. Rowling's cash Gazette. AFP

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UP Speech and Drama dept. boasts of formidable alumni

By Bebe Cervantes

I WAS IN COLLEGE FOR OVER five years being a "permajor," meaning I was enrolled in premed, pre-Business Administration, pre-Law and pre-Public Administration subjects, but never finishing those courses. My close cronies, Jeanne Gamboa, Ashel de Leon, now National Artist Gina Brocka, and I were so lifetime early each day.

However, instead of attending our classes, we spent the whole day in the seedy Liberal Arts basement, where we drank a lot of the extreme black coffee served by the beloved Mommy Rhoda, while we surrounded ourselves in discussions on philosophy, politics, religion, art and literature engaged in by the intellectual likes of Dr. Rosario Pascual, Dr. Orosfo Corpuz, Dr. Cesar Majul, Professor Concepcion Badoy, Jovita Castro-Guerrero, Mrs. Roberta Feria and poet Virgie Moreno. What a gloriously original group they were!

Rehearsals

The best of us were to the Dilimans campus to socialize, argue and await rehearsals of plays staged by the prestigious UP Dramatic Club, the Sigma Delta fraternity and the Sigma Delta sorority. There were also independent productions staged by the UP Student Catholic Action, Christian Youth Movement and speech-related classes.

Predictably, we were part of these productions because we wanted to be seen and heard. Nilda Ma. Guanzon, "freddie" to all, and the chic and intelligent Isabel "Bebeng" Sevilla (now Isabelo) inculcated in us the firm belief that theater became better once not from classes, but from actual experience.

Freddie produced the likes of Joe Vizmbo, Dry-ad Cecilia Garcia, Joy Gamboa Hosa, Mars and Ely Milayo, Joe Mesa, Jun Roy, Tito Gupit, Phil Calanoc, Angie Collas and Cherry Lacson. But, in reality, was Julie Dobkin Gonzalez, because she was so adept in comedy in the vein in drama.

My contemporaries and I worked hard to translate as ludicrous. So that included Pinky Roger Bayolan, Etta Ortega Bautista, George Ramos, Eric Monteclaro, Heidi de Ocampo, Bobbie Maloy Gonzaga, Bimbo Bonifacio, Jose Ma. Alles, Henry Bobante Garcia, Tony Bautista and ex-nominated as Jose Maria Sison.

Pioneer

In 1998, Professor Gonzalez Alduz founder and her Speech, Drama and Radio gurus like Dr. Alejandro Casimiro, Natividad Sarmiento, Sarita H. Theis, Amelia Lapeña Bonifacio and Lourdes Abad Santos-Bernica founded the Department of Speech Arts. Among its Alfredo Montalan Reyes, Rosario Valenzuela, Angelito Collas, Hilda Jocson, Zenaida Amoranto and Nestor Torre were dynamic additions to the faculty. Lolo Navarro was brought in from Northwestern University's Dr. Wallace Bacon, a pioneer in Oral Reading.

I quickly enrolled in one of the department majors, along with Lino Brocka, Eric de Guia, Jake Kilat Tolentino, and Barbara and Cecille Guidote. Maestro Angelo Rosas, Felicidad Sibayan-Sibayan, Edmund Sicam, Agnes Cabello, Alicia Alfonsin, Noy Dy-Liacco, Heidi Sison and Olivia "Madam" Collas were among its first students. They were followed by Soars, Tony Dinsia, Bibi Abadesco, Becky Bautista, Lisa Macuja, Alice Cuenca, Oskar Arevalo, Isadora Castro de Leon, Aaron Baez Hizon and Gemma de Villar.

For many years, duly3 headed by Lola Fernandez and managed by Manang Leng (deliverer) international, domestic and (frivolous) news to its faithful followers. Its headquarters included classical music and readings of literary classics. During the Diliman Barricades, it gained notoriety for airing the alleged Dandoy on assaults of Pavilion and Sharon and American movies, Dante Rivares. When the activities of Mass Communications was founded, the station was ordered to shut instantly.

BRODICA AND GUERRERO. Both became National Artists.

Core group

Tony Mabesa, Ambet Lenzaderia, Criz Ventula, Antoni Jose, Dido Jalimao, Carmie and I became the core group of directors who staged plays, which eventually found a faithful following from campus residents, as well as students from elsewhere.

The Department of Speech and Drama eventually evolved into the Department of Speech Communication and Theater Arts. Dr. Pat Lacuist and Professor Josefina Agnesano, both alumni of the department, were additional faculty members, along with present Chair Belen Calingacion.

The Department of Speech Communication and Theater Arts celebrates its 50th year this year. UP looks up to its faculty and alumni with justifiable pride!

'Ghosts' tells cautionary tale about 'world-class' lady killer

By Nestor U. Torre

ROMANTIC COMEDY films are supposed to be bright, lilithe, charming, cheeky—everything that the current rom-com, "Ghosts of Girlfriends Past," is not. Take the movie's title to start with: "Ghosts" is certainly a lie: very few lilithe, but it's an accurate description of what the film is about.

MCCONAUGHEY AND GARNER. Playboy playboy and his first love, respectively.

High-flying life

The movie's cautionary tale revolves around Connor Mead (Matthew McConaughey), a highly paid photographer and "world-class" lady killer. He loves his high-flying life, which is made even more exciting by the many women he gets to dilly-dally with. Trouble is, he refuses to get emotionally involved with them, and leaves them high and dry and hurting after he's bedded them. —At his "wedded," no way! He's having too good a time to want to get tied down to just one woman's heart, hearth and home, no matter how wonderful she is.

That wonderful woman could've been his first love, Jenny (Jennifer Garner), whose heart he broke many years ago, and hasn't healed yet. Being cruel and stupid, Connor doesn't know that she's the best thing that's ever happened to him, and it's because he's blind.

He's saved from flying conspicuously over the cliff by his dentured Uncle Wayne (Michael Douglas), who comes back from the dead to knock some sense into his head. He does this by confronting Connor with coins of his past failures, who remind him to no uncertain terms what a horrible bed he's been.

Ironically, Uncle Wayne was the "instructor" who set young Connor off on his lady-killing career. Now that he's a ghost, however, Wayne has seen the error of his ways—and his cunning—and uses names to give his nephew—and his first girlfriend, Jenny—a last chance at (true) love.

So, does Uncle Wayne's ploy work? It does, charming Connor to his very core, and making him realize how accurate and endearing he was to run roughshod over such supreme guys as Jenny.

Unfortunately the movie's way of having Connor to come to his belated epiphany is dark, exceedingly heavy and melodramatic. In other words, the movie's cinematic points are valid, but they are not just its audience through the wringer, but also its viewers.

Sense of fun

Part of the "blame" for this can be ascribed to actor McConaughey, who has lost some of the fun and roguish sense of his that informed his early screen outings. Thus, his process of belated enlightenment is grim rather than wonderfully enlightened.

It is a sense, all that grimness is called for, because Connor should be made to account—and suffer—for all of the hellish he's "killed." In a rom-com, however, more than a bereavement should be leavened with wit, either wistfulness or wry.

In terms of style-appropriate tone, the film's starring genius are Garner and Douglas. They hit exactly the right equipoise between realism and flair that makes effective rom-com both instructive and entertaining. McConaughey should have taken his cue from them.

Search for the 'Next Big Star' begins

By Barry Hi, Usweez

VELASQUEZ. Singing competition veterans.

REGINE VELASquez returns to hosting with GMA-7's "Are You the Next Big Star?" with Kuyang de Leon as co-host. For the first time, unpolished singers will be allowed to join the fill, provided they have no existing recording contracts or have not made commercial appearances as singers from 2008 up to the present. Sino singing hopefuls—a male and female—will be picked up by Regine.

Regine said she covers came down to interviews to hear singing contests because they remind her of the numerous competitions she joined when she was just starting. She recalls: "The month of May was the busiest for me and my father dahil halos isang linggo at contest at kumbaber. Sabi kami sa mga gusong sumayaw."

Reasons

At first, she always gets attached to the contenders, so when elimination time comes, she gets emotional. "They want to fulfill a dream, kaya ako nanoh. Pero dinanas ko 'yun, so I feel—and when it's time for me to host. This is the reason why I don't want to be a part of the judging process. I'm better off hosting."

Contestants don't necessarily hit the big time, even after winning the top plum. Regine explains: "Winning is just the beginning. It doesn't guarantee instant stardom. The network will back you up, but the rest is up to you."

She feels optimistic that the new batch of contenders will produce stars. She observes: "They're lucky. I was on my own at 16 nun. in 'Singing Kampeon.' There was no network that supported me. They also have to remember that this is a fun, but it's not the only barometer for a good singer."

The judges of "Are You the Next Big Star?" are Jimmy Bondoc, Mon Beatillo, Annie Quintos, Sandy Santiago and Dips Fernandez.

Woman power at LRI

IT'S WOMAN POWER AT LEE EMILY SEES opened Studio 116 Dance School for health purposes. She decided to lower her cholesterol level.

Studio 116, located at 220 Shaw Boulevard, Pasig City, is a dance studio that offers classes in tango, waltz, foxtrot, quickstep, rhumba, cha-cha, samba, jive, swing, salsa and even hip-hop. Teachers include dance competitors-trainers Sir Rikardo Lapuzan and Lea Limpot. Call 895-5500, or visit www.studio116dancescholl.com.

Home accessories

For her part, Tan Tian Ong is a young entrepreneur who ventured into leisure after finishing school. In March, she opened Tian Tian Limited at the LRI Arcade. It offers made-to-order furniture, gift items, home decor and accessories, as well as clothes and shoes that she herself designed. It also offers special customer services.

Handy Assistants

EMILY Silva (center) with her Studio 116 team.

Tian Tian's mother, who has a store of her own (Simply Asian) a few steps away, is her mentor. She's very happy because "my customers have become my friends. I get a lot of ideas from them."

Visit LRI's "End of Summer" sale from May 21 to June 8. Many stores offer the latest in home interiors, furniture, fine arts, photography, spa, gourmet food and the arts.

* * *

Visit our Features and Curios travel photo exhibit at rm. 227, second floor, LRI Plaza, and get directions for individual and family activities during LRI's "End of Summer" sale. Call 899-1707 or 896-3268.

Insights for mothers

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bernardo

WE OBSERVED QUASI MESSAGES on Mother's Day. One was particularly disturbing because it involved motherhood as "a thankless job that is full of hardships and has no rewards." So, we responded to that text message this way: Motherhood is not a job, but an opportunity to raise souls in life bodies. Insights: 1. Even if your home is not outspoken, the Supreme Parent is outspoken pleased that you have shared your love. He will reward the favor.

Relationships

2. Everyone is a spiritual spark, and the family of souls is limitless and expansive. Our relationships are beyond blood and family name.

3. Therefore, it's possible to feel closer to others than to those whose family name we share. Indeed, love is beyond material designations.

4. There are loving "newborns" who have never given birth, as well as hateful mothers who have never truly loved.

5. A mother who enters her children with love, raises her level of awareness and consciousness.

6. Motherhood is not a phase in life, but a zone of consciousness.

7. Loving is better than rejecting, ecstatic, nurturing is better than refusing to grow up.

8. Every soul is unique, and each one demonstrates love and caring in unique ways. When it comes to love, don't compare or compete!

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Feisty performances in ensemble comedy

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By Rico P. Avila

"Dad Na Si Lolo"

D: Joey Duquia
P: Vilma Alajar, Roderick Paulate

IN SOSO TOMATOES

"Dad Na Si Lolo," the death of 78-year-old family patriarch, Aurelio Hernandez (Tony Cruz), brings together five feisty siblings—played with comic flair and gusto by Gina Alajar, Elizabeth Oropesa, Marilyn Reynes, Dick Israel and Roderick Paulate—to mourn his passing. But, the unexpected family reunion uncovers dark family secrets that open up old wounds and add more tension to the already combustible situation.

The conflict between Maureng (Alajar) and her ate (Reynes Oropesa), who constantly features her sister's "underachieving" husband, only takes a back seat when they have to perform the rituals in observance of the country's many superstitious beliefs about death and mourning.

Swishy bravado

The situations gets even sudsier when their cross-dressing gay brother, Aaron (Paulate), arrives and, with his unbridled harmonies and swishy bravado, steals the scene from under their noses. Those crazy brothers and sisters don't always get along, mind, but when they're outnumbered politically, they lose consciousness at the scene they don't like. Isn't that so family-ish?

On point of performance, Alajar demonstrates why she is one of the country's best actresses. Her portrayal of the aggrieved sister is **narrative**. **It showcases her ability to shift effortlessly** from serious comedy to heavy drama—and back.

Oropesa, Paulate and Reynes also do stellar their respective roles. Bernie Castillo, in this year's straight-acting gay role, shows a lot of promise.

But, Topacio's film has flaws. After a while, the running gag about those superstitious beliefs have its comedic stunts.

Unfortunately it has more things going for it. It may be unapologetically slapstick in execution, but with its unique premise, witty script, brisk pacing, distinctly Pinoy sensibility and the strong performances of its leads, this heartwarming ensemble comedy generates humor without being overtly offensive.

SATURDAY Special

Sharon sings for kids in latest album

CLINGY. Sharon Cuneta's new album is packed with songs for children. | Photo by Jay Ronquillo

By Nico P. Aalo

WERE HAVE ALL THE BEAUTIFUL local kiddie songs of our childhood gone? Some preschool learning centers still teach "Bahay Kubo" and "Leron, Leron Sinta" to their students, but many prefer "My Eyes, My Knees, My Shoulder, My Head" and "Rosey, Mosey, Jingle" over "Sa, Tabo, Dibdib, Ulo" and "Maliit na Gagamba."

So, Sharon Cuneta and her executive-husband, Francis, thought there had to do something about this dilemma, partially to the English language via "Children's Rhymes and Lullabies." Her (Sharon's) latest recording.

Idea

She shares: "The idea for this album stemmed from a need to find books Tagalog and English songs for our children, Frankie and Miel. We have a collection of albums of English songs for kids, but couldn't find any that contained Filipino tunes.

"So figured, if we felt a need for recordings that featured local kiddie tunes, there were many parents out there who felt the same way! Since there are also children overseas all over the world whose children haven't heard of or grown up with songs for them from their homeland, we thought we had to come up with this collection."

In the album's liner notes, Sharon thanks Kiko for helping her "instill that love of learning in our little girls (the big girl, KC, too!)" and for "teaching them to speak in straight English and straight Tagalog.... and rarely ever in Taglish."

The 18-track collection—which comes with a sing-along companion CD—is divided into five sections: "School Learning Time" features medley of preschool songs like "Sampung Mga Bulak," "The Alphabet Song" and "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe"; "Playtime" includes young kiddie jingles like "If You're Happy and You Know It (Clap Your Hands)" and "Jack and Jill".

"Nap Time" gathers lovely slow tunes like "Four Imaginative Elves," "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory"; "Activity Time" showcases a collection of local dances like "Magtanim Ay Di'Biro," "Sitsiritsit Alitaptap Song" and "Tong Tong Pakitong-kitong," and "Sleep Time" includes well-loved melodies like "When You Wish Upon A Star."

Novelty

In a number of mediocre, illustrations back-to-back English and Tagalog versions of songs like "Ten A Little Tuspoc like ay Mishi na Hoof" and "Seven Days A Week Pitong Araw na lang, Linggo," adding novelty to the lineup is the inclusion of the bonus track, "Star Ni Mr. P.I." in which the singer-actress sings with Frankie and Miel.

Sharon coats her kiddie-song selections with light, soft and saccharine vocals that convey innocence, optimism and a sense of fun. And, it doesn't hurt that she's known for her sincerity and wholesome countenance, which further lend credibility and believability to the concept.

You'll have a blast listening to the few exhilarating medley of "Magtanim ay Di'Biro" and "Itsitsi Gitsi," as well as original ditties like "Pito Pito Ur Barangay," "Sitsiritsit Alitaptap Song," "Ha-a-Bawang Dukid" and the rollicking "Tong Tong Pakitong-kitong."

Phrasing

The soothingly beautiful lead vocal of the lifesaver's "Heaven and Love" and "SMS" lender makes a welcome return in "Where You Where Upon A Star" and "A Dream Is A Wish Your Heart Makes," though the latter is dragged down by her unsentimental whispery-breathy phrasing, which occasionally makes her sound like she has dyspnea—the same problem that hobbled the second volume of her "Sa Ilalim ng Buwan Ako" late compilation. Obviously, this is something she needs to get a grip on in future recordings.

Particularly memorable are Sharon's versions of Paul Williams' "Rainbow Connection" and "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," both given dreamy, hushed like undercurrent, coalescing of synthesizer, Rhoda Quevedo and Dutch Montilla's respectively. Our top mark, however, is her heartfelt rendering of "Bituing Ito," the unimpressive song Tagalog version of "Brahms' Lullaby"—one of Sharon's best vocal performances to date.

YOU TUBE: 41

'Star Trek' launches Chris Pine to stardom

By Bernie U. Toreo

THE "STAR TREK" PREQUEL IS NOT only a big hit, but it's also made a new star of its lead player. Chris Pine, who's had the distinct good fortune of being tapped to play the plum role of the U.S.S. Enterprise starship's young captain, James T. Kirk.

The actor is one of the Hoy season's most coveted assignments, because it builds on William Shatner's portrayal of that fiercely captains in his manner years. Having delighted tele-viewers for decades, the "Star Trek" franchise's move to the big screen is a major film event, the success of which is sure to rub off on the young actor, with Pine on its most prominent beneficiary.

Luminaries

How did the 28-year-old actor fit sadly get his big break? Very definitely he exercised weight discovery. In fact, he can even be described as having been born with the proverbial silver spoon in their hands as his maternal Both of his parents, Robert Pine and Geraldine Gilford, were actors, and were his grandparents on his mother's side, Elsie M. Gilford and actor Dayton, were Hollywood luminaries.

So, it was no surprise when Chris decided to follow in their footsteps. His first role came in a 2003 episode of "E.R.," and he quickly followed up with appearances on "The Guardian" and "CSI Miami." The following year, he joined Anne Heche-led miniseries

FINE. Playing young Capt. James T. Kirk.

love-himself in "The Princess Diaries 2."

After a good break like that, you'd think that Pine would turn up in mainstream, but he had to hide likewise with more TV roles (in "Six Feet Under," "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit," "Fifty Cent," "The Bells") and an indie movie, "Confessions."

In 2006, Pine appeared in the TV movie, "Surrender Dorothy" and in "Just My Luck," a Lindsay Lohan starrer. More movies followed ("Blind Dating," "Smokin' Aces"), but big time stardom continued to elude Pine—until J.J. Abrams tapped him to play Captain Kirk in the current "Star Trek" blockbuster.

What clinched the deal for him? As far as looks go, he aren't all that perfect and photogenic. But, that "flawless" could in fact be part of Pine's appeal: his comic actor is more real and accessible, and easier than that.

In addition, his mix of rough-per sinned smarts and sensitivity is a refreshing combination that heaps his per-sonal fresh and surprising. Topping

For LA-area Pinoys, orchestra's historic debut is hot-ticket event

LOS ANGELES—FOR THE CULTURAL AND social cognoscenti or just plain music lovers among the Filipinos living in Southern California, all roads converge tomorrow evening, May 17, lead to the Saban Theatre in Beverly Hills, where the first Filipino symphony orchestra outside the Philippines makes a historic debut.

It promises to be an exciting gala night. Bob Hensley, the Grammy-lauded and -raised musical director and conductor of the Filipino American Symphony Orchestra (Faso), told us that the orchestra has grown from the original plan of 40 to 45 to about 60 members. It will be an unprecedented moment—a theater troupe in the 60 brimming with 50-Pinoy musicians, from veteran and teenaged to accomplished veterans, who will play Filipino classics, pop and Broadway gems, and classical music.

"I'm very, very excited," exclaimed singer Joey Albert, who's one of the guest performers (the others are Stephanie Reese and Pete Escobido). She wrote via email, "I'm looking forward to it. I really be able to sing my hit songs with a full orchestra. But, I'm more excited for Bob, who's a dear friend. This has been his longtime dreams. Tomorrow as facilitator to Filipino music. She Bob deserves an opportunity like this."

Bold decision

"Any philanthropic endeavor is always a bold decision," Joey declared about Bob's undertaking, especially in these tough economic times. "I applaud Peggy and Gene Ortiz for creating Faso. This most uplifting event will make every Filipino American proud."

The Ortizs, who are outstanding leaders of the FilAm community, are the publishers of Asian Journal and BuhaiBayan, a glossy new magazine distributed in the US and the Philippines.

The singer told us, "I will be performing three OPM tunes and two English songs, including a movie soundtrack[sound] composition originally arranged by Louie Ocampo for a string quartet. I'm looking forward to a most uplifting evening filled with pride in Filipino artistry and the universe in art and soul of Filipino-ness."

Hearing worked with Bob before. Joey knows that the orchestra is in good hands. "Bob is one of the most dedicated and disciplined musicians I know," she shared. "Both his music and life are inspiring. His quest for musical fulfillment is no different than his successful quest for his Golden Bowl: goals[He] is an incredible example of determination and dedication. This is how Bob found his father, as well as his dream concert."

"I pray that this dream becomes a permanent institution," Joey said of Faso. "We've all seen great orchestras come and go in the Philippines, shattered by economics, politics and personal conflicts. I hope that everybody has finally learned that pride and ego do nothing but destroy good and beautiful things—and that, to make a good thing last, everybody has to truly come together and make sacrifices for the bigger cause. This is one Filipino artistic endeavor I pray will stay."

Unity and pride

Dagumpay "Pi" de Leon, secretary of National Artist Felipe Padilla de Leon and Bayanihan Musicos, an accomplished pianist who plays the contrabass in Faso, is optimistic. "I'm very excited," Pi said via email. "I feel that something good will come out of this, in terms of lifting the spirit of our people and, hopefully, unifying us from the feeling of entry and pride as Filipinos."

Pi, who describes himself as "an engineer by profession and a musician by vocation," champions symbolic music in Southern California. He teaches ensemble courses at UC Riverside (he also taught the first ever Philippine string ensemble at UCLA). "I've never played in an orchestra," he wrote. "I'm more of an aficionado as far as playing the bass is concerned. It's gratifying to know that I can contribute in some way to a wonderful and successful concert."

"Bob is really doing a good job, considering that he has to manage individuals with different levels of experience and ability," Pi said of their orchestra leader. "Overall, I believe he has the right temperament and patience to lead it."

Pi is confident that tonight's concert awaits fans after it makes its boo-hoo gala night debut to... musicians evening at it. He explained: "The ultimate goal of Faso is to establish itself as a legitimate institution that nurtures Filipino talents and promotes the beauty of our culture, particularly in music. I'm all for it. I believe that...as Filipinos, we should continually strive to make people aware of our heritage through the musical medium."

Email rmpolo_1205@yahoo.com, and read his blog "The Manila Buyer," on http://blogs.inquirer.net/manilabuyer/.

SHROUDED (RIGHT). Conductor Bob Hensley (left) leads the Filipino American Symphony Orchestra (Faso), the first Pinoy symphony orchestra outside the Philippines.

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD
Rafael V. Nepales

'Star Trek' ...

From page H1

the entire package is Pine's great sense of humor, which "Star Trek" takes full advantage of in lighter its relentless series of tag-hang action and battle-scenes.

This early Pine's "Star Trek" moves has resulted in other major roles in upcoming productions like "The Great Lawyers," "Operation: Queen," "Small Town Saturday Night" and "Carnivale." Clearly, Chris Pine is here to stay.

Another major beneficiary of "Star Trek's" strong showing at the office is John Cho, the fourth financier-actor singer who's cast as Hikaru Sulu, the only Asian member of the USS Enterprise's courageous crew of space explorers.

More visible

Cho's character is more visible than most, because he figures strongly in a key sequence in which he engages in a flashy swordfight with a member of body-alien villains.

A look at Cho's TV-movie credits indicates to that his biggest role was as Harold Lee in "Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle," "Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay" and "Harold and Kumar Go To Amsterdam." His role in "Star Trek" may not be as meaty, but the sci-fi production is bigger, so it's given Cho's career a major boost.

More Mexican delights

MAZATLAN, MEXICO—I COULDN'T KNOW closure a worse time to visit. It's the height of the season for the tuna capital, and everyone is ready to jump at the sound of a siesta.

Fortunately for us, we're staying in Public Books, Emerald Bay in Mazatlan, hundreds of miles away from Mexico City, where the virus is rampant. This tourist paradise is close to the sea. Prices are affordable, people are kind and the food is great.

Last Saturday was the long-awaited feast of the feast and the Holy Mass. My aunts, Frances and Amore, and I raised to watch the flight to a bus. We tried to keep our emotions in check, but the moment our hotel-bound I hatters in the first sound, we jumped, shouted and pumped our fists. It was surprise, many Mexicans loved Manny, so, in the end of the bout, we were exchanging high fives with some of the other customers.

Tuna-evening

Delicious: ceviche smothered with sweet-mashed cheese and jalapeño sauce perfect after a tuna-evening in an open-air bar that specialized in baby-back ribs. It was finger-lickin' good. Walking around town, I came across a fresh juice corner with an interesting name: Dengue. Then we took a taxi named Pulmonia! Funny how some names maybe appealing to some, but not to others.

A plan I went back to for three consecutive days was El Dello Luna. My first experience with this place happened back home many

Megastar

build up bodies

Sta. Lucia at 18

Kamikazee

Mandaluyong Bikini Summit

'Sweet 16'

Art of Living workshop

More ...

Recipe

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GALLERIA

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	6 ANGELS & DEMONS
2 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER	7 DEO WA SI LOLO
3 IP MAN	8 X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE
4 GHOSTS OF GIRLFRIENDS PAST	9 ANGELS & DEMONS
5 STAR TREK	10 HEAVENLY TOUCH

ERMITA

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	
2 ANGELS & DEMONS	5 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER
3 IP MAN	6 STAR TREK
4 ANGELS & DEMONS	7 X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE / HEAVENLY TOUCH

METRO EAST

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	5 IP MAN
2 ANGELS & DEMONS	6 X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE
3 ANGELS & DEMONS	7
4 STAR TREK	8 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER

NOVALICHES

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	4 HEAVENLY TOUCH / DEO WA SI LOLO
2 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER	
3 STAR TREK	

PIONEER

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	3 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER
2 ANGELS & DEMONS	4 STAR TREK

STA. ROSA

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	
2 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER	
3 STAR TREK	
4 THE SECRET OF MOONACRE	

LIPA

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	
2 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER	
3 THE HAUNTING IN CONNECTICUT	
4 SUPER TYPHOON	

DASMARINAS

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	
2 STAR TREK	
3 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER	
4 THE UNICORN	

IMUS

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	
2 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER	
3 STAR TREK	
4 THE UNICORN	

ANGELES

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	3 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER
2 STAR TREK	4 SUPER TYPHOON

STARMILLS

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	4 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER
2 ANGELS & DEMONS	5 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER
3 STAR TREK	6 X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

BACOLOD

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	
2 ANGELS & DEMONS	
3 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER	
4 SUPER TYPHOON	
5 X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE	
6 FAST & FURIOUS 4 / WOLFHOUND	

ILOILO

1 ANGELS & DEMONS	
2 ANGELS & DEMONS	
3 STAR TREK	
4 BFF: BEST FRIENDS FOREVER	
5 X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE	
6 THE HAUNTING IN CONNECTICUT	

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ONE FOR THE MONEY,

Two for the 'AI' finals show

ALLEN AND LAMBERT: Who will be the eighth American Idol?

By Noemi G. Torre

A FEW WEEKS AGO, THE final square-off in the current season of "American Idol" (yeah, I'm such opposed to be a foregone conclusion: Adam Lambert was definitely in, and in a slightly lesser extent, on were Kimmy Cobley and Allison Iraheta.

Then came the "shocking" night when Brad Giraud was voted off...and Adam ended up in the bottom three for the first time in the competition. Even more shocking was the announcement that Adam had ranked fourth that week...in other words, he had gotten fewer votes than Cobley, Iraheta and even Kris Allen, who until then was deemed to be the weakest surviving finalist next to Giraud.

That was truly a shocker, because it sounded that Lambert was bankable—and by somebody as "weird" as Idol? The upset was a tribute to Allen's persona, as well as a chilling reminder to Lambert that, while he was clearly the idol's frontrunner, he couldn't afford to take anything for granted, and had to buckle up to the "final finals," along with the other survivors.

Allen's surprising upset in some ruined our "psychic" prediction of the Idol's final three (Lambert, Cobley and Allen), prompting us to shoot our fledgling career as spot-on prognosticator of all things short biz (we got last year's "Taw Davids" finale and winner Cook absolutely right).

Appeal

Having retired from the visionary game, we can now merely and innocently speculate (this is being written on a Wednesday) that this year's final race will be Lambert and Cobley, with Lambert favored to win the "AI" crown. Again, however, Allen and his new legion of fans and voters could prove us wrong, so "times exactly" is the word for the week.

Having said all that, we should further note that, as he is remorseless and long-suffering appeal are concerned, Lambert, Cobley and Allen all have something to be desired—for different reasons.

Lambert's vocal range is spectacular, but after a number of weeks of performances, his high and extended notes are no longer all that surprising. They've become even overstayed their welcome for some viewers, because, he hands-on them most of the time.

Orientation

Cobley is a fine singer in his own right, but his performances are so "AI"-ish sometimes found wearing due to his generally and safely pop orientation, and occasional poor song choices.

As for Allen, he's the idol's most improved finalist, but his lack of vocal power is sometimes still an issue, as he can't really afford to play it cool and collected; should he squeak into the "final-finals."

Another issue that needs to be noted is the increasing infighting among the idol's jurors. Last Wednesday, Simon Cowell recently criticized his co-judges for their comments and/or song recommendations, prompting everyone else to jump in on him.

Discordant note

All this may have been orchestrated to add tang and sting to the final-finals, which may not be all that exciting since Lambert appears to have outpaced the competition. Still, jurors are supposed to be objective—not bitchy to each other, as Cowell's tirades at the times discordant note.

PS. As of this writing last Thursday evening, the GTI "t-mike" telecast revealed that "American Idol" Season 8's two surviving finalists are Lambert and Allen. That's one for the "AI" final-finals—what about the one for the money and the Americans Idol title? The final square-off explodes next week.

Megastar extols motherhood

MEGASTAR SHARON CUNETA realistically observes that motherhood is the most difficult "job" in the world, but stresses that it's also "the most fulfilling." She states, "For me, nothing compares to my being a mom to BC, Frankie and Miel."

"My own Mommy Elaine has always been there for me, through both good times and bad. I want to be like her to my kids given up! She's taught me the importance of good health and proper nutrition.

"As a mother, I'm strict, but I'm still a friend, so my girls can go to me for anything. I encourage their dreams and ambitions in life and build up their self-esteem. I read a lot to Frankie and Miel, to stimulate their imagination and develop their love for books. I also spend time with them in the kitchen.

"Being a mom is not an easy task, because we're entrusted with young bodies and souls to nurture and guide. I respect all the hardworking Filipina mothers who will do anything to ensure the welfare of their children. There's no greater feeling than seeing your kids healthy, happy and successful in life!"

'Mahalin Surilng Sining'

A visual arts fete, "Mahalin Surilng Sining," will be held from May 29 to 31 at the LRI Design Plaza on 210 N. Garcia st., Makati (tel. 895-1772). Events include the "Pagdirigan Pinoy" art exhibit opening on May 29, "Pulong Gising" art talk and forum, "Manito Mo" art seminars, and art workshops on May 30. Plus: A focus on the works of Solomon Aguilar-Alcuaz, opening's booths and a culinary fair.

Richmonde Grill's Chef Exclusives

The Richmonde Hotel's Richmonde Grill (tel. 636-7777) offers its Chef Exclusives this month, featuring special dishes like Calamari Salad, Grilled Skirt Steak Chorizo, Seared Salmon Fillet and Montage

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Big CD and DVD sale

This weekend, a big boy one-time sale CD and DVD sale unveils at 1467 Quezon ave. (1104 Food). All musical genres are included.

Gumtropolis Theater activities

May 23, summer workshop/party culminating revival, "Louis Armstrong," at Gumtropolis at the Park (5 p.m.). May 23-June 1, Ed Mueller conducts a stage and production management workshop. May 25 and 26, 30m1 session auditions. Call 526-0603.

Pets in the City

On May 31 at 604 North Edsa, The Block, it's a fun-filled day for dogs and their owners. Buy the original video of "Beverly Hills Chihuahua" and send of love dog services. For activities for kids, bonbags, and a fabulous Chihuahua Fashion Show at 4 p.m.

Storytelling contest

Last call (for anyone age 17 or older) to join the Gig Book Storytelling Contest ending on May 31. The theme should be something that southern families, especially children, can identify with. For details, check out gigbookcontest.blogspot.com, or e-mail gigbookcontest@gmail.com. A project of the Gig and the Arnaiz Foundation, a leading advocacy for southern children.

Dunkin' Donuts' Dance Dunkdown

On May 26, the grand finals of Dunkin' Donuts' national competition, the It's Coolers Dance Dunkdown, will be held at the Music Hall of SM Mall of Asia, with Vhong Navarro, Sam Concepcion and the Streetboyz as hosts.

Universal Studios Singapore auditions

Today at 2 p.m., Universal Studios Singapore is auditioning stunt performers, powered-lippers and call-in talent at Studio M, 912 Mirada bldg., 8009 Pilila st., Bgy. Valenzuela, Makati. At 4 p.m., auditions are for animated street stars (costumed roamers). Call the New Years Company at 899-0630, or visit www.universalstudios.com/auditions.html.

Check that label

Pia Cuneta's authors looks and healthy lifestyle have prompted people to ask her for tips on how they can also live healthily and well. She shares: "Stay away from junk food and too much salt and sugar. And, by checking the labels of your milk products, you will find that Nestlé Pro-Heart Protection contains the optimum amount of nutrients that best address women's health and nutritional needs."

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